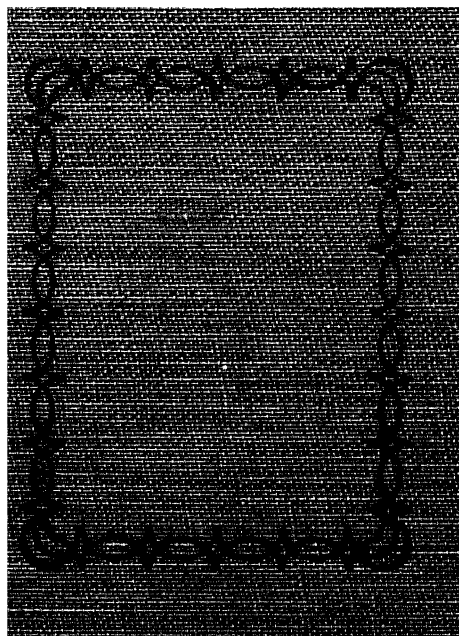


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Spawn of the North

SPAWN OF THE NORTH

BY
BARRETT WILLOUGHBY



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TO
MY DEAR ADVENTURING FATHER
MARTIN BARRETT

SPAWN OF THE NORTH

CHAPTER ONE

I

THE girl, slender, blonde, in a jersey of silver green, seemed a part of the radiant Alaska morning. She stood alone at the wheel in the pilot-house of the small cabined cruiser, *Golden Hind*, and with a sureness that lent a lean, daring grace to her movements, swung the speeding craft down the channel between spruce-green islands.

The air flowing in through the open windows had an exhilarating crispness born of distant snows, and she poised a moment with lifted chin to draw it deep into her lungs. The thick fair hair that blew back from her face was parted on the side and drawn loosely to the nape of her neck in a way that displayed her little ears and the gallant modeling of her head. Against the matt-ivory of her skin the tiny *v* in the middle of her upper lip was exquisitely defined. Her straight-gazing eyes were grey and green like the sea, and as she brought her boat about on a change of course, she half-closed them so that the long black lashes might temper the brilliance of sunlight flashing on the water.

Dian Turlon, after an absence of two years in the States, was back on the waterways of her own Alaskan Archipelago. She had returned to Ketchikan only the night before; yet now, though the edge of a June dawn had barely faded from clouds that streaked the blue, she was already rounding a buoy ten miles from town. The dip of the vermillion top in the wave from her bow, the smooth vibration

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of the engine under her feet, the speed of her cruiser with the swift-running tide — all these were familiar salt-water things dear to her since childhood.

In a pliant contralto she began one of the fishermen's songs her father loved to roar, when, as her younger brother Ivor put it, he was three sheets in the wind as a result of celebrating a successful salmon run:

*We're out to mine the Northern sea!
Yo ho! My bully boys, ho!
Out where the wind is wild and free;
Yo ho! My bully boys, ho!
We don't give a damn for cold or heat,
For heaving decks or slippery feet,
We're a crew the Devil himself can't beat!
Yo ho! My bully boys, ho!*

The rhythm of it stirred the latent lawlessness that came to her from her father's blood. What a fellow he must have been when he began his career! she thought. A youthful gill-netter on Bering Sea. A fisherman of wild vitality, shoulders like a grizzly, flanks like a lean, swift wolf. Roistering, singing, fighting his way to dominance. She was proud of her father; proud to be the daughter of a pioneer who had made himself one of the most powerful fish barons in the salmon-packing industry. And though she had been educated in the States, and would soon be going back there to live, she was glad she was Alaska-born.

It was like the satisfaction of a long hunger to feel the country about her again: salt air, pure and cool with the breath of forests that came down on each side of the channel. Dustless green of spruce and hemlock sweeping up slopes that notched themselves against the sky. Flight of seagulls in the sun. Warbling of hermit thrushes nesting in the elderberry bushes that flowered white along the shore.

Alaska was the loveliest summer playground in the

world; yet a week ago she had been in drowsy, golden California, in Berkeley, packing her trunks for a gay season at Santa Barbara. She marveled now at the strength of that impulse which had caused her to brush aside every obstacle, every personal obligation, to return to the land of her birth.

All her life she had been aware of the North's magnetic pull, its mysterious promise. But it was only this year, when she had every reason to remain in the States, that she had found herself unable to resist that indefinable beckoning. It was almost as if she were a part of the mighty tide of life that moves northward each spring.

She thought of that perennial migration — argosies of sea and air surging up from the South in response to the mystic call of Nature. By wing and fin they came in countless millions: ducks, geese, small birds, seals, and silver salmon; valiant creatures braving the dangers of tremendous distances to mate and bring forth their young in Alaska's green solitudes.... Alaska! Land for the consummation of clean, wild loves that insured the perpetuation of sturdy species!

Everywhere now in the vast country about her pulsed the stir of procreation. In the forests, in the sea, on the tundras, in every broad river and mountain stream that threaded the wilderness. She felt it, the quick passion of the North, strong, productive; and feeling it, knew a brief, rapturous inebriation, a keen awareness of life and the power for life in herself.

She dwelt with new appreciation on the intense loveliness with which the short season moved swiftly to fulfillment. The sun shone long hours, forcing vegetation to vigorous life, to the crisp perfection of things grown in an unsullied atmosphere. Flowers bursting from buds in pelucid blues, crimsons, and the paling yellow of flames were of a texture so exquisite they looked like blossoms be-

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gotten of sunsets and ice. Beauty, youth, growth were everywhere — and a vague, delightful promise.

But what could Alaska be promising her? Already she had everything life could offer a girl.

She held out a slim tanned hand to admire the splendor of a square-cut emerald in etched platinum that gleamed on her third finger. Engaged to Alan Bronson — and their wedding set for December! She felt a glow of tenderness for him back there in San Francisco; Alan, brown of hair and eyes and skin, his becoming tan acquired at golf and polo. He had not understood her sudden mad impulse to come North any more than she, yet he had been endearingly considerate about it, even when she insisted on flying to Seattle to catch the earliest steamer for Ketchikan. Because of this she had limited her stay to two weeks. At the end of that time Alan was coming to fetch her South.

Perhaps because of her slim bloneness, he had always treated her as something fragile and delicate; she was eager that he should see her against the background of her own wilderness. Alan himself was such a satisfying product of civilization that there was a delightful piquancy in the thought of his being with her in Alaska. They'd be alluring in a new way, each to the other. And for a little while they'd enjoy together this land Dian loved so well; this land to which she was saying good-bye because of him.

Her musings were shattered by a sudden swerve and a violent pitching of her cruiser. With an exclamation of annoyance she steadied the wheel and noted the cause of the disturbance. A speedy gasoline seine-boat of battleship grey had overtaken and was passing her so close on the port side that the *Golden Hind* was leaping like a wild thing in the wash.

Dian frowned at the craft gliding on ahead of her.

The name *Who Cares* flung itself in insolent black letters from the stern — and the helmsman standing in the door

of the pilot-house was coolly staring at her. Across a dozen feet of water she got a swift impression of him: tall, black-haired, leanly masculine, a maroon-colored kerchief knotted jauntily about his throat. Then her eyes met his squarely and an incredible, outrageous thing happened.

She caught her breath while something in her and something in the dark young man rushed forward, met, and merged in a warm, velvet flood of light. It was over in an instant, leaving Dian seething with indignation and resentment. The effrontery! The impudence! A fisherman daring to go by like that to look her over! She felt unaccountable impulses toward retaliation. Then she nearly laughed aloud at herself, recognizing them as the same, probably, that motivated little *gamines* she had seen on the boulevards of Paris countering the flirtatious impertinences of young drivers, with one hip cocked, arms akimbo, and darting outthrust tongue.

She raised her eyes across the rapidly widening distance between her and the *Who Cares*. The man was inside now attending to his steering; but she saw something that filled her with malicious delight: a loose rope-end hanging over the after side of his craft was snaking along in the wake that boiled from beneath the stern.

Dian's mouth went up at the corners in a smile that lent a pixie touch to her narrow face. '*Who Cares*, indeed!' she mocked the seiner now disappearing around the point ahead. 'You'll care, dark one, if you happen to reverse your engine and get that rope tangled in your propeller!'

2

She brought the *Golden Hind* back on its course.

She should, of course, turn and go back home where she had left her house guest, Eve Galliard, fast asleep. But something — was it the hope of coming upon the offending

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Who Cares in distress? — impelled her to go on. She was running close to shore now, past boulders hung with bronze and gold rockweed; past pendent-boughed hemlocks; silver-blue spruce. The channel swung ahead, an enticing silver lane in the warm light. Distant mountains below their snows were blue as larkspur, soft as plush. Mist hung low in the valleys. She had been aware of all this before, yet of a sudden it seemed to have taken on a new glamour.

In a flash of exuberance she leaned from the door of the pilot-house and called a greeting to an eagle sunning itself on a high tree-top.

The great bird somersaulted from its perch and headed into the wind with slow beats of its powerful wings. Watching its easy flight gave Dian a fine feeling of freedom. She, too, was going to be gloriously free during these two weeks of Alaskan summer that were hers. After that she would be quite content to go back to the States, marry Alan, and make his charming, easeful life her own.

Two weeks... fourteen days.... The time, all at once, seemed very short, very precious. There were so many beloved places and things to which she must say good-bye. The *Golden Hind*, for instance, named after the regal privateer of Sir Francis Drake. True, after she was married, Alan would get her a smart motor yacht if she wanted one; but no other craft, however splendid, could take the place in her heart occupied by this little cream-colored cruiser which had been her vacation delight ever since she was eighteen.

With a swift poignancy compounded of affection and farewell her mind embraced everything about the *Golden Hind*, even the old phonograph whose music had made sunset waters so enchanting during bygone summers. This morning the ripple at the prow and the steady, muffled throb of the engine made melody enough for her ears. She ran supple hands over the wheel to feel again that sense

of restrained power that always came to her from the contact.

A love of keels and salt-water things had been Dian Turlon's all her twenty-four years; at least, ever since her baby feet had taken their first wavering steps along the deck of the *Star of Alaska*. Her mother's father, the tawny-bearded old Viking, Nils Nilsson, was master of that lofty-sparred square-rigger which each spring led the Alaska Packers' salmon fleet out through the Golden Gate. Dian would never forget those trips of her childhood — the bark, gallant and romantic: her stately spread of canvas, her gleaming, holystoned deck, the proud lift of her figurehead, the Golden Flying Lady, as she bore away into the North Pacific, her cavernous hold filled with cannery supplies and crews for the far-flung fishing grounds of Bering Sea.

Dian's father, keen young Irishman, was superintendent then for the Packers' Cannery at the mouth of the Karluk River, the greatest salmon stream in the world. Each season he took his family with him on the *Star's* April sailing out of San Francisco — her mother, her little brother Ivor, and herself. And in September when the salmon run was over, he brought them back to the States again with his crew.

After he left the Packers, he became an independent canner in southeastern Alaska. Some ten years ago he had built the big Turlon home in Ketchikan where his family lived during the summers and occasionally during a winter. He had also bought the *Star of Alaska*, the fastest packet in the white-winged salmon fleet.

His friends laughed at him for that, because steam and gasoline had already sounded the knell of sailing ships. But her father was always a law unto himself, Dian recalled proudly. There was something swift and strong in him that attained his ends. That was why everyone called

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him 'Eagle' Turlon, instead of his given name, Patrick. At any rate, the *Star of Alaska* was at this moment lying at the dock of the big Turlon cannery at Sunny Cove, some fifty miles down the coast from Ketchikan. This spring, as always, it had transported his cannery crew and supplies from Seattle.

Only a man as rich as her father could afford such a gesture; for he kept the great ship waiting at Sunny Cove until the season's pack was ready to be taken South in the autumn. That was the way it had waited in those early and more leisurely days when Eagle Turlon was 'high man' for the Packers, and Dian's mother was alive.

She knew why he kept the old bark in commission. It was aboard the *Star* that he had met and instantly fallen in love with the daughter of Nils Nilsson. The skipper had raved like a madman when he found that Irish Eagle Turlon had run off with his Swedish Elna and married her at the nearest Russian mission at the height of the salmon run! Dian smiled to herself recalling her father's way of bellowing at her when he disapproved of her: "Tis the combination of 'harp' and 'ski jumper' in you, my girl, that makes you so damned disturbing!"

Certainly he would disapprove of her now if he knew she had come back to Ketchikan in his absence. Though she adored him, she felt a keen satisfaction touched with a certain humor, as she thought of him well on his way to Siberia seeking to extend his packing operations to that distant coast.

It was because of the uncertainty of the run in Alaska, a fact which her father never admitted outside his family, that he had sold three of his canneries. He retained only Sunny Cove, his pride. Sunny Cove, the largest, most modern plant in southeastern Alaska, with its twelve great salmon traps, its fleet of cannery tugs and seine-boats. This he was holding for eighteen-year-old Ivor whom he

had bullied into studying ichthyology at the University of Washington. Ivor, who wanted to be a musician!

Ironically, Dian was the one who loved everything connected with the fish run. But women had no place in this fascinating game that had held her father in thrall for more than thirty-five years. Dian had been able to do little more than snatch at that romance which endures wherever sturdy bronzed men garner the world's food from the sea.

Romance.... For some reason the thought brought a vision of the slim, dark young man looking at her from the pilot-house of the seiner, *Who Cares*. Yet he hadn't quite the look of a fisherman. Who was he? Where had he gone? She smiled to herself, remembering the rope trailing precariously in his wake; and her gaze swung searching the sun-bright empty waters ahead.

Her attention was arrested by one of the Turlon fish traps across a small bay that opened to her left. It lay on the water off Kemerlee Head in readiness for the legal opening of the fishing season a week hence. She put her wheel over and headed for it.

Abreast the floating trap she shut off her engine and drifted along the criss-cross pattern of logs, large as the foundation of an office building. At one end was a tiny shack with a small window in each wall through which a man might watch the approach of strange craft or shoot at trespassers. Here, during the run, a watchman would live to protect the catch from depredations of fish pirates.

Floating traps had always interested Dian more than the larger pile-driven kind used on the open coast. This Kemerlee Head floater was anchored some distance from the shore. Its heavy timbers held suspended the labyrinth of webbing that formed the 'pot,' the 'heart,' the 'spiller,' net-enclosed compartments that glimmered fathoms down in the clear depths. About it all was the cool, clean tang of salt water against spruce wood.

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It was peaceful here in the sun; a tranquil inlet surrounded by forested hills and blue mountains crowned with dimming snows. Quiet, too, except for the lapping of water against the logs. Yet in the very hush there was a strange expectancy. The great trap swung above its anchors... waiting. Dian thought of the hundreds of like devices placed at every strategic point, in every deep-cut fiord of southeastern Alaska... each one waiting for that mighty silver host now cleaving northward through the green coastal waters.

She hoped fervently that the run would be good this year and that it would begin before she had to return to the States. 'Maybe this will help ——' she said to herself; and half in play, half in earnest, she spread wide her arms, lifted her face, and with eyes closed chanted in the manner of an Indian supplicating the Alaskan Mother of All Salmon:

'O Fog Woman! Call your North-born children home!'

3

As Dian speeded up her engine to continue her morning run, she regretted that she hadn't had time to provision the larder on the *Golden Hind*. She might then have cruised down as far as Green Waters, caught a few trout, and cooked one of her old-time breakfasts aboard. But no, she remembered suddenly: Eve Galliard — her self-invited guest — back home and probably awake now. Silken, lazy, perfumed Eve. 'She no more belongs here in Alaska than I belong in Timbuctoo!' thought Dian, her eyes moving over the serene, virgin wilderness.

But a guest is a guest, and thoughts of the waiting Eve, coupled with a vision of old Suey Woo padding about the big kitchen preparing a delectable breakfast, finally made Dian swing her cruiser back on the return course.

When she came in sight of the floating trap again, she espied a boat made fast to the frame. Through the binoculars the craft leaped close. She recognized it with a triumphant little grin — the insolent *Who Cares* out of commission with that rope wound round its propeller!

In a manner that reflected her father's own dashing way with a cruiser, she speeded toward the moored boat.

She swung in close and slowed down a few yards from the seiner. So far as she could see there was no one aboard. Then, as the *Golden Hind* came to a stop, she was startled to observe a head shoot up from the water off the stern of the *Who Cares*. Thick black hair dripped down over nose and eyes. Tight-shut teeth gripped a villainous-looking knife in a way she had never thought to see outside the illustrations in a pirate book. A couple of strong strokes, and the owner of the head was treading water beside a trap timber. He drove the knife into the log with a quick motion that lifted his body, and Dian saw the smoothly muscular back of an athlete, bare wet arms and shoulders glistening in the sun, bronzed neck and forearms. High up on the biceps of his right arm was tattooed a small flying gull.

Apparently he had not heard the muffled approach of the *Golden Hind*, for he made a movement to clamber up on the frame of the trap.

'Hello!' Dian sang out hastily.

He tossed his head to throw the hair back from his face, and, keeping one arm over the log, turned to regard her from a pair of cool, deliberate, deep-blue eyes.

'Hello!' he responded. There was both power and mockery in the curve of his lips, and, though Dian could detect no welcoming note in his voice, she liked its deep masculine quality. 'Where did you come from?'

'Oh, I just dropped in for a moment. I thought you might be in need of a tow.'

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'A tow?' His air of interrogation was perfect. From his lowly position he flashed her an answering smile that showed firm white teeth. 'No. Thank you very much.' A faint, provocative amusement hid behind his words. 'I wasn't expecting company and — well, you find me just following the quaint old Alaskan custom of taking a morning dip.'

Dian was swept with the stinging warmth of embarrassment. For a second he convinced her that she had, in truth, blundered upon just that occasion. Then, nettled by the man's poise even while she admired it, she looked at him with a level, appraising glance she had inherited from Eagle Turlon. Meaningly her eyes traveled from his face to the thickened propeller glimmering under the stern of the *Who Cares*, and back again. A moment later she raised her chin with a low, rippling laugh of derision.

'Another quaint old Alaskan custom, I suppose — this gripping a hunting-knife in your teeth as you perform your ablutions. What do you do with it?' she asked with calculated sweetness. 'Use it instead of soap?'

Without giving him a chance to answer, she started her engine and in her most spectacular manner swung the *Golden Hind* on its homeward course.

As she left the trap behind, she found that the encounter had set her heart beating faster. There was something distinctly challenging about that dark young man. She knew now he was no inexperienced boatman. He had merely been careless, and in his masculine pride had not wanted her to know it. He was the kind who would have paddled the *Who Cares* to Ketchikan with his hands, if possible, rather than have a woman tow him in.

She didn't need to look back now to know that he was diving off the trap and coming up under the stern of his craft to cut the rope free.... Only an excellent swimmer could do that in these cold Northern fiords.... A wet,

glistening figure flashing through the sunlight into the still, green water.... Strong.... Beautiful, too. Smooth-skinned, glowing with health. And that pale-blue flying gull on the point of his shoulder — something suggestive of travel in that; of far-away places...

Men were mysterious, glamorous creatures.

Of a sudden the waterways, mountains, the cloud-piled azure sky, the whole Northern world, seemed inexplicably sunny and lyrical. She was aware that she was very young, buoyant, filled with the joy of life. Impulsively she lifted her face and raised one hand high as if to a benign and smiling friend. Then in a voice soft with a wonder and sincerity she said:

‘Thank you, God!’

CHAPTER TWO

I

FAR up the sun-glittered channel Dian's destination lay — Ketchikan, fish village, water-front town, salmon capital of the world, with a spawning stream rushing through the center of its business district.

Serenely piscatory it flourished in the heart of the wilderness oblivious of other Northern cities that boasted their fur and their gold and derisively labeled Ketchikan's pioneer cannerymen like Eagle Turlon, 'the salmon aristocracy.' Yet it was Turlon and his kind who had built an Indian fish camp into a city which was the industrial queen of southeastern Alaska. Here fish was currency. Fish was prosperity. Fish was life.

Despite the fact that more salmon was packed in and about Ketchikan than in any other place on the globe, it was singularly free from industrial ugliness. There was an Old-World quaintness in the way its houses clung to the crags that formed the instep of a mountain — a blend of grey and white with red splashes marking the roofs of salmon barons' mansions high on Tyee Hill. From its back door the green forests rose to snow-capped crests. In front silver waterways serpentine between the timbered islands that protected it from the sea. At its feet a line of the most modern and efficient canneries edged the channel that mirrored the lofty beauty of its peaks.

Ketchikan's great fishing fleet lay moored to the water-front floats, two thousand trim gasboats that sent up a criss-cross thicket of masts and fishing gear: ivory antennæ of salmon trollers folded up against yellow spars; deep-green web brailers hung with silver chains. Orange and

brown lateen sails drying in the sun. Multicolored washing flapping in the rigging amid the swirl of breakfast smoke from galley stoves. And on the after-decks of seiners heaps of cork-studded nets stained sienna and jade, on top of which bareheaded fishermen lounged and smoked in idleness.

The fishing fleet was at rest this morning and the big cool canneries silent. Yet theirs was a pause of expectancy. Back of the seeming inertia lay months of intense preparation which had geared these units of the great packing industry for instant action.

Ketchikan, like an eagle, perched on its crags awaiting the salmon run and the legal opening of the fishing season now seven days away.

2

On the outskirts of the town beyond the last cannery, Spruce Point thrust its fish-hook curve into the channel. Its grove of trees formed a sylvan setting for Ketchikan's most famous roadhouse, the Floating Trap, built half on land and half on an immense scow that rose and fell with the tide. The floating section contained the Poker Room, a favorite resort of packers who met afternoons for a discreet highball, a game of solo, or to talk over contemplated fish mergers and determine the destiny of canneries. The land half was devoted to a spacious dance-floor and many small tables, where Ketchikan, regardless of social position, reveled at night. Here also were the kitchen and the living-quarters of the owners, Briny and Blossom Dow.

The place was deserted at this early hour, except for those two at breakfast in the kitchen. Since the cook didn't come on duty until noon, Blossom herself stood before the range puffing on a cigarette and favoring Briny

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with a view of her broad back as she poured batter onto a hotcake griddle.

Blossom was short, plump, swarthy, with straight black bobbed hair that would never lie flat behind. Her fat little arms were bare to the shoulder, her dress a shrill pink, and as she energetically flipped hotcakes, she switched in a way that made her brief skirt waggle like a bird's tail, the movement exposing a back view of much pudgy leg and pink silk bloomers above the bend of the knee.

Briny, seated at the table, was a wiry little man, straw-brown of hair and face. His pale eyes were gazing out over his adenoidal nose with a look of comic melancholy.

'Gor'struth, Blossom! I tells you wen Eagle Turlon comes 'ome from Siberier, 'e's going to raise particular 'ell wiv us about Ivor.' Briny's plaintive voice issued from a wide mouth busy with mastication. 'Our name is mud wen 'e finds we give 'is only son a job playing the pianner in the Floating Trap.'

This, evidently the end of a long monologue, was received by Blossom in ominous silence. She punctuated the air with a jet of tobacco smoke and continued to turn hotcakes.

'And specially tonight wen the big party's coming off wiv all the 'igh collars in the fish business down 'ere seeing 'im doin' of it. Mind wot Eagle does to Noel Thomas, that poor barmy coot of a superintendent of 'is who goes off on Miss Dian's camping party and gets stuck. I'm telling you, square and all, Blossom, I knows 'ow Eagle ——'

'Hell's bells!' roared Blossom, whirling upon him, pancake-turner upheld as if she were about to prophesy. 'Will — you — shut — up!' With a glare of exasperation she advanced step by step, jousting with the turner to emphasize her remarks. 'I gave Ivor that job! I've known that young one ever since he wore rubber pants, and he's going to live right here with me as long as he wants. Some-

body's got to stand by him, now that his paw has gone off leaving him without a dime, just because the kid won't go on studying fish! As for Eagle Turlon' — she made a jab across the table — 'you leave that old pirate to me. I'll handle him, being as you're scared of ——'

'Me! Scared!' Briny's thin voice rose to a squeak of indignation. He came half out of his chair and shot his neck like a bantam rooster on the defensive. 'Me scared o' the likes o' 'im! Wy, I could ——'

'You — could, you squirrel-mouthed Limey! Why, you'd have about as much chance against Eagle Turlon as a gutted snowbird! I ——'

'Wot do you know?' shrilled Briny, addressing some invisible third person. 'That's wot she thinks o' me, 'er lorful 'usband! That's the thanks I gets for picking 'er up outta the gutter and making a lidy outta her! Me, wot 'ad a dozen other dames that crazy about me they ——'

'Make a lady out of me! Gawd, listen to him!' With fat arms upraised, Blossom apostrophized the ceiling in a mighty voice that drowned out Briny's, though it failed to silence him. They swung into a vociferous duet, Blossom predominating: 'A lady! And me once the belle of the Barbary Coast! Me, with the bartender of the swellest house on the row for a sweetie! A guy that never bought anything but wine when he was off shift, and wore a diamond as big as a binnacle lamp in the middle of his silk shirt-front. A swell fellow that ——'

'— and me wiv the prettiest barmaid at the Sailor Lad on Dock Street, Liverpool,' Briny's piping emerged as Blossom was forced to pause for breath. 'A tidy bit o' all right too, and wild about me. She says to me, "Briny, old thing ——"'

'— and he never went on shift 'less he had a coat starched so stiff it could stand alone,' Blossom cut in *fortissimo*. 'Every parlor house dame on the Coast was

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trying to make him, too. But my Alfred wouldn't fall for none of their high society plays. Alf was true to me. Alf loved me. He ——'

'— this 'ere Blossom, she still thinks 'erself a swell bit of skirt. A thrill a man'd fall for, and she forty-five and broad a-beam as a fish scow ——'

'— and me fool enough to throw myself away on this Limehouse rat, this shrimp of a Briny! Gawd, if I'd only known then what I know now! Me, with a father the foreman of a vineyard down in Santa Clara County. Oh, what would my folks say if they could see me now living here in a fishtown in a siwash country with a poor squirt who couldn't even have done the porter work at the joint Alf tended bar in! Oh, oh, oh! Why did I ever ——'

'Oh, bli'me!' Briny pawed air impotently. 'Oh, 'ell! I give up. I quit.' He fell into his chair and began eating furiously.

But Blossom was only just starting. She stood over him, and with swipes of the pancake-turner bemoaned that unlucky day when she, a Barbary Coast butterfly of twenty, had gone down to the San Francisco Embarcadero to watch the *Star of Alaska* set sail with cannery crews for Bering Sea.

Eagle Turlon, arrogant and young then, had dominated that Bacchanalian scene, rounding up his men and putting them aboard: drunken fishermen, opium-dazed Chinamen, cannery hands imprisoned in the embraces of red-light women who had an eye out for their return in the fall with the season's wages.

On that day of departure spring and the aftermath of a champagne party were in Blossom's blood. Responding to a dare, she had managed to elude Turlon's eye and stow herself away in one of the *Star's* lifeboats.

She went to sleep, and woke to find the ocean heaving all about her. She dared not emerge until the packet was

two days out. Then she was discovered by Briny, a shrewd, rather graceless whelp of the seven seas. He was substituting as cook for the officers' mess, the regular chef having been too drunk to make connections with his ship.

Despite Briny's physical shortcomings, he won Blossom on that trip. He was keeper of the food, and the little stowaway had come upon a time when food was of greater value than either money or clothes. Between them there developed the fighting affection which had kept them together for a quarter of a century. Blossom, it is true, had gone off once with a trapper who took her to Fairbanks in the interior of Alaska. But there, to her indignant surprise, no one knew or cared anything about ships or tides or the salmon run. And so Blossom speedily returned to Briny — with a black eye and a splendid collection of furs.

3

Briny, in a fresh burst of spirit, was referring to this distressing chapter of Blossom's past when the nearing sounds of an unmuffled exhaust smote the air like reports of a pistol. Hostilities ceased. The pair hurried to the small window that commanded a view of the float built for the accommodation of guests arriving by water.

Blossom said: 'It's Sockeye Jones, in his *Gas Gulper* from Sunny Cove. I wonder what's the matter.'

A few minutes later they greeted the plant foreman of Eagle Turlon's cannery. He came into the big kitchen with a seaman's gait, one arm swinging and the other inert. He was a short man, about fifty, with wide, powerful shoulders and a cheerful, tanned face surmounted by a mane of silvery-gold hair. On his large head a clean little 'gob' hat rode at a precarious angle that gave him, even in his most serious moments, a what-the-hell look.

Sockeye sank into Briny's vacated chair. 'Prrrrrrrrrr!'

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He puffed out his cheeks and expelled his breath through his mouth with such violence that his lips flapped noisily over a perfect set of false teeth. 'Blossom, my lily! Make a smudge in that firebox and stick on some grub. Half a dozen eggs on a raft of buttered toast. Briny, me lad! Grab the cocktail-shaker immejit — a shot of moose-milk, and make her plenty potent. I got a blow this morning that left me with no more vitality than a cold boiled potato!'

'Wot's up?' asked Briny anxiously, as he dragged an imperial quart of Hudson's Bay rum out from under the woodbox. 'Anything wrong at Sunny Cove?'

'Everything shot to blazes!' Sockeye stuffed a cold hotcake into his mouth and spoke through it. 'Where's that kid, Ivor? I thought he was bunking here with you since he and his dad had the big row.'

Blossom was immediately on the defensive. 'He is. He's just gone out for a walk.'

'Oh-h-h-h! A walk!' Sockeye raised his eyebrows with elaborate sarcasm. 'But of course us girls has to have our exercise!' He shoved his little hat over to the other side of his head and thrust a cigarette into his mouth, where it waggled an accompaniment to his words. 'My God! To think that Eagle'd spawn a young one like that! Why, when Eagle was nineteen he was bossing a gill-net crew of the toughest *hombres* in Karluk. Could lick any Swede or Hunkie in the outfit, too. A walk! — Gimme that moose-milk, Briny, I —'

'You lay off panning that boy, Sockeye!' Blossom eyed him belligerently while she slapped butter on a slab of toast with a butcher knife. 'What do you want with him?'

'I merely wanted to ascertain his reactions, as we say in refined business circles, when he learns what a hell of a hole Sunny Cove is in. Know what?' Sockeye was suddenly serious. He leveled a middle finger at his listeners. 'I

brought the superintendent in this morning and planted him in the hospital where he'll be growing little pneumonia germs for the next three months — if he don't cash in. Double pneumonia, what's more. Got it falling off a fish-trap on the Cape Fox shore. Here we are with the opening of the season only a week off, no superintendent on the job, none to be had for love nor money, and to cap it all, the Old Man galloping off to Siberia to grab more fish. There's no one here to represent the family but me and that piano-pawing sissy of a son who ——'

'Old a minute, Sockeye! 'Aven't you 'eard about Miss Dian arriving unexpected on larst night's steamer?'

'Dian!' exploded Sockeye. 'O-mi-god!' He threw up both hands. 'As if I didn't have enough grief without that devil of a girl slipping back here to raise hell when her dad's gone!'

'I say, Sockeye! You're fair off your top talking like that about Miss Dian. Wot's she ever done to ——'

'Listen, Briny!' The foreman pecked the little man on the chest with his forefinger. 'We've both known that girl since her mud-pie days. She's a good kid and we think a heap of her, but we got to face facts. Women and fish don't mix.'

'Bahhhh!' derided Blossom.

Unnoting, Sockeye went on: 'Remember — Noel Thomas was one of the best superintendents Eagle ever had at Sunny Cove until Dian went over there three seasons ago and he got sweet on her. Then he didn't know whether he was going on fins or feet. Remember also what she did the minute her paw went up to Juneau to see the Governor that year: got up that durned camping party for the bunch of sorority sisters that was visiting her. Right smack in the middle of the salmon run, too. And just because they wanted a man along, Noel goes. He ~~thinks~~ they're only going off on a picnic — but instead

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they stayed away three days. My God! Keeping a superintendent away from his work three days in the middle of the run! And while he's gone, one of the traps goes out!

'Aw-w-w-w, you prejudiced old barnacle, Noel insisted on going ——'

'No wonder Eagle packed her off to the States,' Sockeye ignored Blossom's interruption. 'And kept her there for two years straight. But it's poor Noel I'm sorry for. Eagle fired him and made it so hot for him he hasn't been able to get a job on the coast since. That,' finished Sockeye, cleaving the air with his finger, 'is what comes of Dian's monkeying around the cannery.'

'Aw-w-w-w, you give me a pain in the neck!' Blossom bulged with contempt. 'Blaming that on Dian! I suppose if you don't put up the pack this year you'll blame that on her too. Can't say a good word for them Turlon kids, can you? And you working for their dad this past ten years. I know what's eating you. You can't forget you was foreman for John Kemerlee when he built Sunny Cove. You still ——'

'I say, Sockeye!' Briny at last succeeded in making himself heard above Blossom's flow of words. 'Jimmy Kemerlee's in town visiting his brother Tyler for a few days. Wy not get 'im to take over Sunny Cove? 'E seems to be out of a job this summer.'

'Brilliant brains!' ejaculated Sockeye. 'You know as well as I do that Jimmy would rather work for the Devil than become superintendent for Eagle Turlon. Especially at Sunny Cove, his dad's old cannery. Oh, you don't have to tell me that Eagle got the plant away from old John Kemerlee square and legitimate. I know!' And as Sockeye attacked his fourth egg, the three old friends discussed the break that had separated the Turlons and the Kemerlees ten years previously.

It had happened during the fish panic that hit Alaska just after the Armistice, when nine out of ten packers went into bankruptcy. John Kemerlee, lifelong friend of Eagle Turlon, was among the unfortunates. Turlon, because of his banking connections, not only weathered the financial storm, but prospered. He might have helped John Kemerlee save the Sunny Cove Cannery; but, rumor stated, Turlon had long coveted that plant, the largest and most modern on the coast; and he made no effort to help Kemerlee.

Eventually, and legally, he acquired Sunny Cove, as he acquired everything he set his mind on.

But those nearest him during that period knew that it was not easy for Eagle Turlon to stand by and watch the waters of financial disaster close above the white head of John Kemerlee. John had shared with Eagle those glorious fighting days of lawless fishing when the two, reckless young gill-netters at Karluk, had gone into battle side by side to 'clean out' gangs of Italian fishermen who were invading their grounds. They had reversed the process more than once and successfully raided the fishing territory of others.

After Turlon took over Sunny Cove, John Kemerlee never spoke to him again. Kemerlee died soon after. He had nothing to leave his two sons, Tyler and Jim, but the big Kemerlee home on Tyee Hill. Both young men left the University of Washington without finishing their courses, and came back to Ketchikan. They rented their home to strangers and began where their father had begun, as fishermen.

Turlon had tried to do something for the sons of his old friend, especially for Tyler, the elder, who, despite the fact that he was under age, had enlisted when America entered the World War. Tyler had a year on the Italian front before the Armistice. When he returned from over-

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seas and reëntered the University, he had a war record for reckless courage and a decoration from Italy's king.

After John Kemerlee's financial crash, his sons ignored the advances of Eagle Turlon. Tyler, craving excitement, loving uncertainty and change, kept on as a seiner. Now, at thirty-two, he was the owner of two boats and had the reputation of being the most daring navigator of small craft on the coast. Jim, three years younger, had become first a cannery bookkeeper, then a superintendent for a packing company at Memory Inlet, several hundred miles northwest of Ketchikan, from which city he had absented himself since university days.

'There's a heap of difference between those boys,' commented Sockeye.

'I'll say!' agreed Briny. 'Tyler got some God-awful notions wen 'e was runnin' round wiv them dagoes across the pond. He gave me a turn the other day, 'e did. We'd climbed the steps together to the top of Tyee Hill wen 'e stops short and crouches there at the edge of the cliff looking down on all the people going along Front Street. "Look 'ere, Briny!" 'e says to me, grinning his lazy grin. "If a chap had a single machine gun just 'ere, 'e could wipe out the whole town of Ketchikan!" 'e says. And wiv that 'e makes out 'e's training a gun on them innocernt folks down below and popping 'em off. He fair gives me the pip!'

'Oh, he was just spoofing you, Briny. Tyler is full of the devil. Jimmy's the serious one. You remember, as a kid he was always reading old books of travel, especially Alaskan travel, and figuring on the future of the country. Jim's a born ancestor. But Tyler! Gosh! Nothing but death will cool his philandering blood!' Sockeye swung his big head from side to side. 'Why, when he was only a high-school kid on the Ketchikan basket-ball team, one of the girls on the Red Line gave him that nugget belt-

buckle he wears. His maw was alive then and she used to worry a lot about him. She'd give parties for the high-school gang up at the big house, trying to keep Tyler at home. The school-girls were crazy to know where Ty got that buckle. But when they asked him he'd laugh and say: "I mined it." Ty's careless when he talks to women. Tells 'em only half a thing, or gives them half an answer to a question. But darned if they all don't fall for him.'

'And 'ow 'e can dance!' put in Briny with an upward roll of his pale eyes. 'One night ——'

'He can dance, yes,' admitted Blossom, with the bitter wisdom of her kind. 'But the way he holds a woman gives the idea that he stayed with her last night. He's the kind of guy the young husband warns his wife about on the way home from the dance, and she knows he's right about the fellow, but she makes excuses for him — and begins planning ways of seeing him again. But Jimmy ——'

'Aw, now, don't get the idea that Jimmy's so slow!' Sockeye nodded with an air of deep sagacity. 'He's just quieter, that's all. Believe me, he's looked 'em all over and tried 'em all out, but I reckon he decided they're all the bunk. Why, say! If a girl on the Red Line tried to give Jim a nugget buckle he'd wrap it in a hundred-dollar bill, press it back into her hand, and say in that smooth, deep voice of his: "And still I'm your debtor, darling!" No, sir — ee! No woman's ever put her sign on Jimmy Kemerlee. When one does — well, I want to see her, that's all.'

'I can't figure out wy Jim's not on his cannery job this season,' said Briny.

'That does seem queer,' admitted Sockeye, holding out his cup for more coffee. 'Surely he wasn't fired. You know he built that measly plant up till it was holding the record for a one-line cannery. And him operating in a nest of fish pirates, too.'

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Blossom stood, coffee-pot in hand. 'I hear all the fishermen round here are going to sign an agreement again this year that they won't buy pirated fish.'

'Oh, you know how much good that'll do!' Sockeye dismissed the idea with a laugh. 'Cannerymen's agreement! Poof! No one expects to keep it. But speaking of pirates, I nosed into Pirate Cove the other day and found Red Skain prettying up the *Fort Tongass* for the season.' Sockeye laughed again. 'He was busier than a dog with fleas shoving putty into the bullet-holes in his pilot-house — you mind the time the Pirate Patrol potted him last year.' Replete with food and drink, Sockeye cocked his hat at a jaunty angle and leaned back in his chair to light a cigarette. Then he continued confidently: 'Well, that's one thing we needn't fear at the Turlon traps. Eagle knows too much about pirating ever to let any of these Ketchikan lads get away with his fish.'

'Oh, yeah!' Blossom slanted a look from cryptic black eyes. 'But Eagle's in Siberia this summer.'

'Hell, yes!' Sockeye suddenly remembered his troubles. 'And I got to rustle a superintendent for the works.' He inserted a finger under his hat and scratched his head reflectively. 'I wonder, now, if I couldn't give Jimmy Kemlerlee a hard-luck story that'd make him consider taking over the job.'

4

Sockeye was pondering this question as he climbed aboard the *Gas Gulper* and departed for the float at Ketchikan.

Now that he stood alone at the wheel, his face under his straight-set little hat was serious. He was worried over the calamity that had befallen Sunny Cove on the eve of the run. And he knew every fishman in the vicinity was

watching to see how he'd bring the big cannery out of its predicament. Eagle Turlon, like all powerful men, had his enemies who would be glad to see Sunny Cove fail in its pack. And Sockeye, loyal to his plant with the intense loyalty characteristic of the fishman, was quite ready to lie, beg, or steal if need be, to promote the welfare of the cannery he had served for over ten years.

He nosed his craft through a fleet of seine-boats clustered along the City Float. On the float, and on the dock above it, men were nervously pacing in the sun and standing in groups talking. Expectancy, suspense, showed in their faces, for every one of them, fishermen, cannery hands, packers, and merchants, were players in the fish game, the most costly and uncertain gamble in the North.

Already, before a fin showed, millions had been spent preparing the canneries, the fishtraps, the fleets of seiners, tugs, and salmon carriers for the run. Sunny Cove alone had invested a quarter of a million dollars. Now, all up and down the coast every bit of gear was in readiness; and man, having done all in his power, was waiting on uncertain Nature.

In the old days, at this tense, waiting season of the year the Indians with special festivities had invoked the favor of the Fog Woman, mother of all springtime things, and especially of the salmon. Sockeye had often seen them, shamans and high-caste Thlinget chiefs, magnificent in beads and blankets, standing at the mouths of spawning streams chanting the salmon prayer as the mists rolled in from the sea:

*O Fog Woman! Call your North-born children home!
Bring us the Supernatural Ones! The Swimmers!
O Life-Giver! Let not their coming be bad,
For without them we perish!*

Today, an army of cannery workers under pay lounged

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in idleness in every packing plant on the coast of Alaska, awaiting the run and the legal opening of the season. And while they waited they discussed the vital question: Will the salmon come in sufficient numbers to enable us to put up our packs in the short six weeks the Government permits us to fish? Or will this be another disastrous year of fish famine that will plunge the entire coast into debt?

Sockeye withdrew his thoughts from these questions and devoted his attention to easing the *Gas Gulper* alongside the *Golden Hind* lying at that part of the float reserved for Turlon craft. As he did so, another larger boat moved in a short distance away.

'Sockeye!' There was a glad note of greeting in the hail.

The foreman looked up to see a dark young man, arm upraised, grinning at him from the deck of the newly arrived boat, *Who Cares*. 'Holy — Sailor!' he yelled joyously, slapping his hat over one ear. 'Jim Kemerlee!' He made fast his cruiser, leaped to the float, and trotting to the *Who Cares*, started to scramble aboard. 'It's been a long time since our trails crossed, kid, but there ain't anyone I'd rather see.'

Kemerlee helped him over the side and stood a moment, hands on Sockeye's shoulders, looking down at the sturdy little man. 'Sockeye — you old fishhawk!' he said affectionately. 'It's darned good to lay eyes on you again. How's everything at Sunny Cove?'

'Lousy, my boy! Putrid! For Pete's sake sit down here on this webbing. I've got to talk to you.'

The two settled themselves on a pile of fishnet and the foreman began pouring out his tale of woe. Jim Kemerlee listened, his eyes steady and thoughtful. But at the end he shook his head.

'Count me out, Sockeye. I'm not interested in any superintendent's job this season.'

The foreman burst into another persuasive discourse

which met with the same response. Then, with the appearance of accepting the other's refusal, Sockeye said: 'Well, maybe I am asking too much of you, kid. I keep forgetting it's your dad's old cannery. But tell me, what you been doing with yourself — galloping up and down the coast?'

'Oh, I've been getting a new line on timber and fish with a view to carrying out some little plans of my own. And at the same time I'm reporting to the Bureau of Fisheries on the number and condition of the chief spawning streams.'

'How's that?' demanded Sockeye with a suspicious look. 'Are they going to make it harder for us fishermen than it already is?'

'On the contrary, they're trying to protect us. It won't be long, old-timer, before Uncle Sam will have weirs and tallymen posted at the mouths of all Northern rivers. You've heard the plan, of course: they'll not open the season to packers until enough salmon have passed upstream to the spawning grounds to insure the perpetuation of the run.'

'Insure my foot!' roared Sockeye, punching his hat to a pugnacious angle. 'Suffering Ike, kid! If we run up against any more restrictions we won't be able to pack enough salmon to feed a goldern seagull! What with the bloody Fish Commissioner cutting down the number of our traps and closing the rest of them over Sunday, we might just as well go jump in the bay!'

'Come on now, Sockeye! Don't try to put any of that old fish talk on me. I've canned too many salmon myself. Can't you see the industry has reached that stage where some restriction is necessary? The depletion of the run is ——'

'Depletion? Talk sense! The run's just as big as it always was. Last summer at Sunny Cove we packed more salmon than ever!'

'Sure you did, you old highbinder!' Jim laughed. 'And how? By fishing sixteen traps against the twelve you had the year before, and the ten you had the year previous to that. And unless Turlon has changed his tactics you did some fine juggling to evade the Sunday closing law that provides for the escapement of salmon to the spawning grounds. And you bought fish from every pirate lifting a trap in your section, didn't you?'

'You're darned tootin' we did!' proclaimed Sockeye with a loud air of virtue. 'Why shouldn't we? We've always done it. We'll keep on doing it. You college fishmen make me sick!' He spat disdainfully over the gunwale. 'You may have the science of economics by the seat of the pants; likewise you may be able to tell the age of a salmon by his scales; but by the Holy Jumped-up, it's us old roughnecks who built up the canning business in Alaska!'

'I'm not disputing that ——'

'And our methods can't be so all-fired rotten since this Territory now puts up two thirds of the world's canned salmon. Two thirds, my lad! That's the record. And it's the result of the time-tested methods of men like Eagle Turlon and your own dad, Jimmy. Don't forget that — your own dad, God rest his soul!'

Kemerlee nodded. 'You pioneers did build up a wonderful industry, Sockeye. But the credit isn't altogether due to your methods. Remember, you had, seemingly, a limitless run of fish each year and you carried on with no eye to the future. It was a case of every man for himself, let the Devil care for those who came after.'

'Most cert-taint-ly!' agreed Sockeye heartily. 'And how do you young folks think you're going to manage it?'

'If Alaska's going to hang on to that record we're so proud of — no, I'll make it even stronger — if the industry is to survive at all, salmon men have got to work together to preserve the fish that lays the golden egg!'

'Awh-h-h!' began Sockeye, pawing the air in deep disgust. 'You talk like a bloody Government fish bulletin.'

But the younger man went on with an earnestness that commanded silence. 'Look here: Why did the packers come to Alaska in the first place? Because they'd fished out the rivers of the South — the Sacramento, the Humboldt, the Columbia — fished them out by your pioneer methods, Sockeye. They came to Alaska, virgin territory, and for the past forty years they've been playing the fish game in the same way — a glorious, lawless, short-sighted way — every man for himself.'

'But ——'

'Hell, don't get the idea that I'm blaming them, Sockeye. Pioneers, in no matter what line, are highly individualized. They have to be. They are the men who strike out alone, and necessarily each one must be for himself. But the pioneer stage is past, Sockeye. If we persist in the old individualistic methods, our fish are doomed. Already Alaskan streams are playing out. They ——'

'No such thing!'

'They're playing out,' repeated Kemerlee firmly. 'Now it's up to us fishermen to do something to preserve the run. We can do it by uniting to observe the fish laws. But how many coöperate? Witness Eagle Turlon — gone off to Siberia to hunt virgin streams. Do such men have the interest of the country at heart? I should say not! Get the money and to hell with the country is their attitude. But with me, Sockeye — why, I was born here! Alaska's my country, my home. And, by God, I'm for anything that will secure its future — whether it be fish laws, or the cannerymen's agreement against pirates.'

'Pirates!' bawled Sockeye. Then, as if overcome by sudden weariness, he abandoned all argument. 'Oh, damn it, Jimmy, quit fighting with me. Can't you see I'm sunk?' His little hat sat evenly on his big head; his wide shoulders

sagged. 'This fish game is just one thing after another. But instead of quitting it cold like I ought, I keep on like a darned fool, just to see what can happen next.'

He poked a cigarette into his mouth and allowed it to hang there unlighted. 'I stuck to your dad, kid, in all his ups and downs until the day he died. But now, when I'm up against it, you don't give a continental whoopee what becomes of me,' he bleated. Bringing his hand down on Kemerlee's knee he looked into the young man's face with eyes he strove to pattern after those of a stricken deer.

Kemerlee burst out laughing. 'I'm on to your sob tricks, old-timer!' He placed an arm across the foreman's shoulders and swayed him affectionately. 'No more palavering, now, about that superintendent's job at Sunny Cove. You see,' he added, 'I've staked out a little strip of land at Green Waters, and during my spare time this summer I'm going to cut logs there for a hunting lodge. I started to run down there this morning but —— By the way,' he broke off, 'whom does that boat belong to?' He indicated the little cruiser lying alongside the *Gas Gulper*: the *Golden Hind*, gay as a holiday in its cream paint with orange-and-black trim.

'That? Why, Eagle Turlon's girl owns it. You must have seen her tearing around in it summers when she's home.'

'I haven't been in this neck of the woods for ten years — at least not during the summers. Seems odd I never met Turlon's youngsters when we were growing up.'

'Eagle always parked his girl in schools down in California, while your paw thought there was no place like the State of Washington for you boys. And Turlon didn't build in Ketchikan until after your paw died. Dian spends summers up here — when the Old Man'll let her.'

'But she's not here now, of course?' Kemerlee's voice was very casual.

'Holy Sailor! I forgot! The little devil certainly is here! Got in last night. Heaven only knows what she'll be up to now that Eagle isn't in the country to hold her down.'

Sockeye came to his feet with a groan of recollection and stood a moment lost in thought. Then he turned impulsively to his companion, who had also risen and was apparently studying the lines of the *Golden Hind*.

'Jimmy...' He hooked a hand through the younger man's arm. His voice grew tender. 'Remember how happy we all were when your dad built Sunny Cove on the site of that saltery he'd been holding for years? Are you hard-hearted enough to let the old plant go haywire this summer for want of a superintendent? You with no job at all on your hands?'

'What's the matter with your stepping into the superintendent's shoes yourself, Sockeye? You can hire another foreman. And it would be a big chance for you.'

'No, Jimmy. No. I'm not big enough to handle Sunny Cove. I'm an inside man, and you don't seem to realize that I'm not as young as I used to be. Why, I've got — I've got' — Sockeye, who'd never had a sick day in his life, searched his mind rapidly for appropriate diseases — 'I've got kidney trouble!' he blurted triumphantly, clapping a hand to the middle of his back. 'And toothache!' He cupped his jaw with the other palm. 'I'm a sick man, Jimmy, and Sunny Cove, the cannery your own dad built, is in danger right now of falling behind in its packing record. Try to realize that, kid. Your dad's old cannery. The biggest, finest, God-damn salmon plant in South-eastern losing its packing record and you standing by letting it happen.... Look here, Jim! Suppose you had a free hand to run the works in your own way, wouldn't you take over Sunny Cove — anyway, until Eagle gets back from Siberia?'

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Kemerlee did not answer at once. When he finally withdrew his thoughtful gaze from Dian Turlon's cruiser there was an odd smile on his lean dark face. 'Your eloquence, Sockeye' — his blue eyes took on a look of light mockery — 'coupled with your most distressing decrepitude, would wring tears from a doorknob. What a joke it would be on Turlon if ——' he broke off, hesitated a moment, then continued. 'Let's talk further about this proposition of yours. Perhaps I might change my mind about that job.'

Half an hour later, Sockeye hitched his shoulders complacently and displayed his beautiful false teeth in a wide grin. 'My boy! You've saved old Sockeye's bacon! It puts new life in me to see a Kemerlee in charge of Sunny Cove again. Now we'll show 'em how to put up a pack that is a pack! Have your plunder ready, son, and we'll chase over to the plant the first thing in the morning.'

'That suits me, Sockeye.'

'And now, ta, ta! I'll sasshay up to the Turlon house to see what Dian intends doing while she's here. Got to keep her away from Sunny Cove, if possible. And — oh, I forgot, Jim. Dian's a nice youngster, but you steer clear of her. In the first place, she's engaged to some rich guy down in California and ——'

'Engaged, eh?' Kemerlee's suddenly narrowed eyes moved toward the girl's cruiser as if he expected to see her there.

'Yeh. And, furthermore, she isn't good for you if you want to stay healthy in the fish business. She got Noel Thomas in Dutch a couple of seasons back. Eagle not only fired him, but he fixed him so far as the salmon business is concerned on this coast. So give Dian a wide berth, Jim. She's bad medicine for a chap like you.'

5

Sockeye swung up Front Street whistling blithely on his way to the Turlon house.

He moved along the narrow thoroughfare lined on both sides with stores and curio-shops and fishermen's supply houses. He hailed everyone he passed: the chubby editor of the daily paper who was rolling along in a bright blue roadster; no coat on and his hat on the back of his head; tall young fishermen, blond, tanned, and picturesque in plaid mackinaws and wide-topped hip rubber boots; Indian fishermen lounging at the edge of sidewalks; laughing white girls putting in time on the streets until the canneries should open to give them work; plump, fashionably dressed wives of packers, waiting in their cars for shopkeepers to bring their purchases out to them.

The street ran level for two blocks, then made an astonishing leap up a hundred-foot cliff by means of steps ascending through salmon-berry bushes, wild roses, bluebells and columbine stirring in the breeze. When Sockeye reached the top, he stopped for a moment to puff and fan himself vigorously with his hat. Then he trotted along the winding road that skirted the edge of Tyee Hill.

On either side rose the fine residences of salmon packers. Laved in warm winds and flooded with sunshine, each house stood surrounded by a tiny lawn, hedges of crimson lilies, gardens of forget-me-nots and delphinium. Even Sockeye, with his mind full of fish, was not insensible to the profusion of Northern flowers and the beauty of the sun-silvered channels that stretched away between the green seaward islands below.

He made directly for the Turlon home, a great house of weathered-grey shingles half-hidden among aspen trees and smothered in climbing roses. The long sun-porch at the back hung like a balcony over the edge of the cliff, high

above the docks and canneries on the beach. Turning in between two low concrete pillars in which the name Turlon was set in clamshells, he followed the flagged path to the wide front door.

It stood open.

When his knocking failed to elicit any response, he entered, as was his custom, and swung across the long, luxuriously furnished living-room toward the kitchen where deaf Suey Woo presided.

Outside the threshold he halted, transfixed by the sight that met his eyes.

Sitting by the window looking up at the old cook was a strange girl in profile, very small in lounging pyjamas of vermilion and gold. Her little bare feet in vermilion satin mules were placed sedately together. From a low forehead, sleek blue-black hair swept back, outlining her head and curling snugly into her neck just above the shoulders. One tiny hand with red-lacquered nails was reaching up to take a highball from the tray Suey Woo was obsequiously extending.

'I know this is going to cure my headache, Woo,' she was saying in a voice singularly deep for such a small person.

'Oh, yessum, missy. Headache he fly out window!' assured the old Chinaman sympathetically.

'Smoking hips!' ejaculated Sockeye under his breath, as the girl with avid daintiness drained her glass. With his gaze still on her, he removed his devil-may-care hat, tucked it under his arm, and tentatively stepped forward. 'Hello, Suey Woo!' he called out as he crossed the threshold into the kitchen.

The girl turned a vivid, heart-shaped face to him: under the black hair, eyes of blank cornflower blue surrounded by heavily darkened lashes; magnolia-white skin, and a small mouth painted geranium red. She handed her empty glass

to the cook and with a slow smile acknowledged the introduction Suey Woo managed.

'Sockeye — he named all same one kind salmon,' explained the Chinaman, grinning.

'That's okay!' asserted that gentleman, uneasily hooking his thumbs into his belt. 'They call me Sockeye, Miss Galliard, after the finest fish that swims.'

The girl allowed her gaze to rest upon him with flattering attention. 'Of course,' she said in her deep, slow voice, 'I can see why they would name you after the very finest fish — Woo!' she turned abruptly. 'Get me another highball and mix one for Mr. Sockeye — You do take a drink, don't you?' she looked up at the foreman from under beaded lashes.

'Do — I — take — a — drink!' Sockeye did a fancy step as he apostrophized the world in tones of joyful assurance. 'Well, lady — by exercising superhuman control, I know I could manage to keep a little something down.'

With indolent grace the girl came to her feet, raised and lowered her little shoulders in a relaxing way, and exclaimed with a sigh, 'What that first drink did for my poor nerves!' She stepped over to the table, seated herself on the edge of it and crossed her knees. One bare foot in its satin mule swung free. 'Now, how about a cigarette?' she prompted Sockeye with a smile.

She took one from his hastily extended package, tapped it against her thumbnail, and put it into her mouth.

'Aren't you going to light it for me?' she asked, leaning close and raising her face with the cigarette held loosely between her painted lips.

'Surest thing you know!' Gallant, but curious, the foreman applied the flame. Then, growing bolder, he lighted his own from hers while looking deep into her eyes.

Suey Woo came with two highballs on a tray. They each took one and solemnly clinked glasses. 'Another sorority

buddy of Dian's?' questioned the foreman, watching in amazement as Eve downed her drink.

The girl nodded.

They set the empty glasses back on the tray. 'Well, well,' he went on, with growing expansiveness. 'You sure have come to the right country. We Alaskans like a splash of color in wine, women, and' — he eyed her bright pyjamas in frank admiration — 'er — underwear. And I can see now that you'll be an ornament to the fish business!' He winked jocularly over the top of her head at Suey Woo. 'You'll find it a great game, girlie. We had one of those writer women up here last summer and I gave her a load of it, believe me. Of course,' he added, with an air of vast literary wisdom that had its source in the highball, 'I had to tell her that the salmon really don't have much of a love motif in actual life.'

'Love motif?' Eve lowered her long-lashed lids, then with effective deliberation raised them to give Sockeye a limpid blue look. 'Love motif?' she repeated. 'Tell me about it.'

'Well,' responded Sockeye with a vague wave of his arm, 'this thing of laying an egg on a sandbar and covering it up with your tail — you can see yourself that it ain't exactly what you'd call emotional interest, or anything that'd make Hollywood rare back and discard its brassière. But it's just as I told that writer woman — if you bring along your plot and your love interest, I says, why, fish is the most interesting darned thing in the — Why, what's this, Suey Woo? More drinks?' The cook had appeared again with the tray.

Eve smiled. 'I just nodded to him to bring them,' she said. 'We'll have one more and then quit.' She settled back on the table and Sockeye, with a low bow, presented her with one of the highballs. As they drank, they grew friendlier. Between compliments, Sockeye told her just

who he was and how long he had been in the fish business. They became confidential. Finally Eve admitted, with one of her slow, provocative looks: 'You know, Sockeye, I can't help but admire men like you. Out in the world doing big things. If I'd been born a man, I'd be doing exactly what you're doing now. But look at me ——' She held up her hands and thrust both trousered legs out in front, her little mules dangling from bare pink heels — 'I'm so small... so useless... just... a toy...'

Sockeye rose to the bait: 'You're cute as a bug's ear!' he murmured tenderly. 'If I were only twenty years younger ——' He finished the sentence with a deep, significant look and drained his glass.

'What a nice person you are... I really believe you do like me a little.' She took hold of his sleeve and shook it gently. 'Come, Sockeye,' she continued with her melting, blue look, 'tell me more about this love motif in Alaska.'

6

Dian, who had been upstairs bathing and dressing after her early morning cruise, came down to the kitchen to find the enraptured Sockeye standing before her guest in the attitude of a pouter pigeon. Eve, with one dainty pointed finger a foot distant from his broad chest, was admiringly tracing the outline of a spouting whale vividly tattooed there.

'Yes, my dear young lady,' he was explaining, 'I got that in good old 'Frisco. Was the year of the big run at Karluk. Woke up on Kearny Street the morning after the *Star* brought us back, and there she was spouting on my bosom natural as life. But you should see what I got on my back. Just a minute, and I'll ——'

'Sockeye!' Dian came into the room laughing, her hands outstretched. There was a friendly gayety about

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her, something as refreshing as a clean blowing wind. Her blonderness, enhanced by a slim frock of ivory flannel, was in marked contrast to the dark prettiness of exotic little Eve; her sea-grey eyes were shining under the amused upward quirk of fine-drawn brows. 'I'm so happy to see you again, Sockeye!' She shook his hands affectionately. 'Tell me, how is Sunny Cove?'

It was some time later when they were sitting by themselves at Eagle Turlon's desk in an alcove off the living-room that Sockeye finished telling of his morning's accomplishment.

'But you simply can't hire a Kemerlee to run our cannery!' the girl protested indignantly. 'You know how unjust those boys have always been to Dad — blaming him because their father went broke and lost the plant! What will Dad say when he comes back from Siberia and finds a Kemerlee in charge of Sunny Cove?'

Sockeye twirled his little hat on one finger, winked, and patted her hand. 'Canning fish ain't a business, Dian. It's a ding-busted guessing contest. Eagle wouldn't care if we hired Judas Iscariot so long as we got the pack. And as for Jimmy Kemerlee — didn't I tell you he holds the record for a one-line cannery? Your dad knows that. Look in those files alongside his desk and you'll find the packing record of every superintendent on the coast. Instead of hopping all over me, Dian, you should be pinning medals on me for being able to talk him into taking over the plant!'

'But I was going over there with Eve to spend a couple of weeks. Now — it's impossible!'

'Oh, you girls don't want to go over to the cannery,' Sockeye put in deprecatingly. 'No fun for you over there. You just stay right here in Ketchikan, Dian. Ivor's here and ——'

'I want to ask you about Ivor. Suey Woo told me when I arrived last night that he ——'

'I'm right here in person to do my own talking, Sis!' cried a gay, boyish voice. And the next instant a tall blond youth entered with a football rush, and caught her up in his arms.

After Sockeye had departed, brother and sister again hugged each other like two cub bears, swaying back and forth laughing in the joy of their reunion. Then Dian held Ivor off to look at him.

She loved this good-looking young brother — his slender, loose-hung body in V-necked white sweater and ivory cords, his fine-skinned eager face, grey eyes under narrow dark brows, tawny hair streaked pale gold from going bare-headed in the sun.

He was regarding her with affectionate commendation.

'Doggoned — little — tow-headed — Swede!' he chuckled, suddenly hoisting her into the air and letting her down again to nuzzle his face against her neck. 'I'm the old prodigal sneaking home for a husk of sympathy.... I suppose you heard how the Eagle kicked me out of the nest, Dian?' He grinned at her, but there was a wistfulness in his eyes that caught at her heart.

'Oh, Ivor, you mustn't take Dad seriously. You know he never means anything he says when he's angry.'

'Well, he meant what he said this time. You see, Sis, I made a grand flunk of ichthyology this semester. Simply can't stick the stuff. Besides, I was studying harmony with the dough Dad gave me for a new roadster. When I came home a month ago, I told him just how it was and asked him to let me go on with my music. He said I'd either have to finish that darned fish course or shift for myself. We had a few words and — well, he told me to get the hell out and see how easy it was to trade a bunch of discords for something to eat. So I did. The day he left

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for Siberia I got a job playing the piano at the Floating Trap.'

Dian felt his eyes on her, those protean grey Turlon eyes that could be so full of dreams, or so full of the devil. She concealed her dismay at the news while her thoughts flew to her father. She could imagine his rage and humiliation when he heard this.

'You ought to hear me tickle the ivories for the fishermen and their girls, Sis!' Ivor was saying. 'I give them all the old hoe-down tunes with jazzy improvisings of my own that would set a mummy to dancing. Honest, Dian, Briny had to reënforce the braces under the dance-floor to keep it from caving in! But you come down tonight to hear me. Big doings. It's the last night before the fish people go off to the canneries for the season. All the e-light, as Briny calls them, will be there as well as the rough-necks.' He slid over to the piano and seated himself on the bench. His long, tanned hands moved lightly across the keys.

Dian, watching him, was at a loss how to handle the situation. Her sympathy with Ivor's musical ambitions warred with her appreciation of her father's plans for his only son. She asked herself: Did Ivor really have it in him to be a musician, or was this idea youthful rebellion against Eagle Turlon's dictatorial management?

'Gee, Sis, it's certainly good to get back to mother's old piano again. The feel of it just suits me, somehow.' He was touching the keys tentatively, looking up at her with eyes that saw beyond her to some vision of his own. 'You listen, now, Dian: Alaskan spring. Mine.'

Ivor began to play. The first crystalline notes stilled the questions in Dian's mind. They sent her thoughts back to Northern springs of her childhood: Clean winds, April sun, and the steep of melting snows... sticky little alder buds opening... the high, thin call of returning geese...

the mew of mating sea-birds. And always the undertone of running water, pure from the mountain snows, from the glaciers; silvery glissading drops, tinkling trickle of creeks, rush and roar of streams over boulders, the deep, quiet flow of rivers joining the sea.

And Ivor's playing brought back something else — a memory of their mother, lovely, golden-haired, sitting at the piano in the evening playing for her children. Dian could see the tow-headed youngsters they used to be, both sitting on hassocks, chins in palms, looking up rapt, entranced. Especially Ivor. Before his chubby hands could span half an octave he could play. Dian remembered how her mother used to pause in her teaching to look over the little boy's head and smile at Eagle Turlon sitting at his desk figuring on trapsites and fishing-gear.... Her mother would know how to handle this situation between Ivor and his father. But — for nearly a decade Elna Turlon had lain in the little cemetery overlooking the waters of Tongass Narrows.

As Dian listened to Ivor, absorbed now in his playing, a strange mental clarity came upon her. She was aware of him in a new way — his wide shoulders, the way he used his arms, his blond head heavy with thick straight hair. Somehow, he made her think of a tawny young moose. She felt the strength of him, his youth, his capacity for music, for ecstasy, all this latent power undirected now. She felt his love of earthy things too: eating, drinking. Everything Ivor did would have tremendous force behind it. And suddenly she feared for him. Something fiercely protective stirred in her, keying her to fight — she didn't know what — for him. And at the same time she felt herself helpless to aid him. Again she was swept with a poignant longing for her mother, for some woman older than herself. A woman clean and kind and wise, who might direct Ivor's power to high, fine things.

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She would have to get Ivor away from the Floating Trap. But how? She knew how stubborn he was once he set his mind on anything.

He ceased playing abruptly and turned to her. 'Oh, gosh, Sis,' he said wistfully. 'If the Eagle would just give me a chance, I'd show him that something besides fish can come out of Alaska. I've got it in me, Dian.' His young face was alight with an inner vision. 'I could — why, I could put the soul of Alaska into music — powerful, crashing, sweeping music of the seas. Fine, silvery music of white peaks against the sun. Rich, deep music of the land, of the slumberous Alaskan valleys, beautiful and lonely now, waiting to cradle a new race in the years to come! I could ——'

He broke off, his eyes focusing on something back of Dian. His exalted look changed to one of curious interest.

Eve Galliard was slowly coming down the broad stairway. One hand held her pyjama jacket tight about her slim hips. Her wide vermilion trousers flapped about her white ankles. Smoke ascended from the cigarette in her other hand. When she was a dozen steps from the bottom, one of her satin mules fell off and came bumping down into the living-room.

Ivor sprang to recover it. Holding it, he knelt while the smiling Eve thrust into it a tiny bare foot that would fit into the palm of a man's hand.

Ivor came to his feet.

'So this is the little brother I've been hearing about,' Eve murmured, stepping back a pace. As she looked him up and down, her eyes grew very blue under her sleek ebony hair. 'You never told me he was like this, Dian. So biiiig! So blond and tall.' She placed her small perfumed body close to him and measured her height against his chest, leaving her leveled hand there while she looked up into his face. 'See, I'm just as high as your heart.'

Ivor gazed down at her with a half-bashful, half-amused expression of interest a mastiff pup bestows on a Pomeranian.

They both laughed.

Watching them, Dian recalled, with ironic humor, how Eve Galliard happened to be present. Nothing had been farther from Dian's mind than bringing a guest North on this trip — especially Eve. Despite the fact that they had attended the same university — Eve being in her last year when Dian entered — and they moved in the same circle down South, Eve had never been a close friend. Yet the morning Dian was packing to leave California, the older girl had rushed into the house half-hysterical over the outcome of her latest love affair, which happened to be with a man already married. Declaring that her heart was broken and that she must get away from everything that reminded her of him, Eve had thrown herself into Dian's arms and begged to be taken to Alaska where she might forget. She was so little, so pitifully tearful and clinging in her anguish, that Dian hadn't the heart to refuse her.

Despite Eve's youthful appearance, she was nearly thirty years old, and it suddenly occurred to Dian that now, since she was here, her advice in the matter of Ivor might prove valuable. Perhaps between them they might induce the boy to give up his playing at the Floating Trap.

Her thoughts flew to the approaching evening. All the fish people in the vicinity would be at the roadhouse, many of them maliciously interested to see Ivor Turlon, son of a fish king, playing the piano for hire at the Floating Trap. Dian made up her mind that she, together with Eve and Sockeye, would attend the gathering and form a family background for Ivor. And they would make it appear the most natural thing in the world that Eagle Turlon's son should be master of ceremonies for Briny and Blossom Dow.

Ivor was, without a doubt, delighted with the guest. He was sitting with her now on the piano bench, and Eve in her most charming manner was asking him to play for her. Dian, relieved, went out to the kitchen to give Suey Woo instructions about dinner.

The first thing her gaze fell upon was the tray with two glasses and a half-empty bottle. Her brows contracted. 'Clear those away, Woo,' she said with a sweep of her hand.

As the old cook complied, a prelude of rich, sonorous chords sounded through the house. The half of Dian's mind that was not engaged with culinary details waited for something brilliant and classical to follow. But the music ceased abruptly. When it began again, two voices rose in a duet of burlesqued bibulous longing.

Eve and Ivor were singing 'How Dry I Am.'

CHAPTER THREE

I

THE evening was in full swing at the Floating Trap.

Under moon-splashed spruce trees the parking space was packed with cars and more were arriving. The float in front was lined with launches. The chug-chug of approaching cruisers mingled with blended sounds of music, laughter, and the rhythmic thump of dancing feet that came through the discreetly shuttered windows of the roadhouse.

Inside, under the subdued light of colored lanterns, Ketchikan made merry in the spacious main room. Walls and ceiling were hung with fishnets from which depended hundreds of balloons shaped like brilliantly colored dolphins. These, swaying in currents of air set in motion by the dancers, swam gayly in a sea of cigarette smoke rising from tables set closely about the square of the dance-floor.

Among the guests moved Blossom Dow resplendent in a brief gown of crimson taffeta and very high-heeled slippers. She stepped as if walking on eggs, a glass in one hand, a bottle of choice Canadian vintage in the other. Her manner of confidential furtiveness was due to Prohibition, which she had never been able to understand, considering it in the light of an affliction like smallpox or the 'flu,' its source unknown, its existence inexplicable.

Business was unusually good tonight, and Blossom surveyed her guests with a look of maternal indulgence slightly tinged with acquisitiveness. The latter was evident when her black eyes turned to the 'kitty' — a small pirate chest into which a tin phonograph horn had been inserted.

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This receptacle was conspicuously displayed near the musicians' alcove. When the dancers went round too many times without tossing money into the kitty, Blossom's eyes became restless as quicksilver. Her face darkened. Finally, with vigorous determination she elbowed her way through the crowd and with all the clatter possible threw a few dollars into the horn of the kitty.

Briny was in his element in the kitchen, where he stood behind a table shaking up 'moose-milk.' This beverage, famed on the coast of Alaska, embodied among other ingredients eggs, cream, and a generous portion of Hudson's Bay rum, the whole being 'mild as a school-teacher's kiss' if Briny could be taken as an authority.

On this night the crowd at the Floating Trap was democratic as only an Alaskan gathering can be. The dance-floor was a circling mass of rainbow colors streaked with masculine black. There were evening gowns and sports frocks; tuxedos and mackinaws; and every style of dancing ranging from the collegiate drag and jiggle to the deadly earnest stepping of big men who pivoted their partners with a firm paw planted in the curve of the back.

Great-shouldered Scandinavian salmon-trollers from Fish Alley were there with their girls from the canneries. Young captains of cannery tenders, superintendents, men of the Pirate Patrol. Lawyers, merchants, bankers, and packers brought their wives and sweethearts from the homes on Tyee Hill. And there was a sprinkling of college students home for vacation from the South. The common dependence on salmon, together with draughts of the benign moose-milk, had welded the whole into a great family party overflowing with benevolence and hilarity.

At one end of the long room in a raised alcove near the cobblestone fireplace, Ivor Turlon sat at the piano directing the orchestra, which consisted of another college youth who performed with amazing versatility on a drum, a

triangle, and a saxophone, depending on the effect desired. Between dances the guests, according to the Alaska custom, furnished their own entertainment. All efforts, good and bad, were awarded thunderous applause.

Ivor, bringing a waltz to a close, turned to look out over the tightly packed dancers. Whom among them should he ask to perform next? He wanted Sockeye Jones to do his fisherman's hornpipe, but Sockeye was escorting Dian and Eve to the Floating Trap tonight, and they had not yet arrived.

His eyes sought Tyler Kemerlee. Ty was a good chap, he thought, even though he was a Kemerlee. Tyler had helped out more than once during the two weeks Ivor had been master of ceremonies at the Floating Trap. He was always ready to make up a jingle, or sing a song, the nature of which he adroitly tempered to the status of his audience. Every woman who came to the roadhouse, whether she was from Tyee Hill or from the Red Line, was eager to hear him sing and play on that old banjo that had seen service with him in Italy.

The banjo was propped against the piano now, a glamorous instrument to Ivor, because the pegs had been whittled out of Alpine ash by a wounded 'wop' soldier Ty had carried in to a dressing-station under fire. Those pegs were carved with the head of Dante, because, Tyler explained with his ironic smile, Dante knew almost as much about hell as the fellows who fought the World War.

'I say, Ive' — the drummer leaned over as Ivor brought the waltz to an end — 'why not ask Ty and Jim Kemerlee to do that iceworm song — you know, that one about the "husky, dusky maid up in the Arctic"?'

During this intermission Sockeye Jones, in his 'Seattle clothes' — a suit of grey tweed — steered Dian and Eve into the Floating Trap and seated them at the table reserved for them. Their entrance was unnoticed because the whole room was engaged in rendering a swinging *fortissimo* chorus:

*In the land of pale blue snow,
When it's ninety-nine below,
And the polar bears are dancing on the snow;
In the shadow of the Pole,
I will clasp her to my soul,
Oh-h-h! We'll be happy when the iceworms nest again!*

Then, to the accompaniment of a banjo, a lone baritone with a laugh in it, carried on the burlesque:

*And our wedding feast will be of oil and blubber.
In our kayak we will roam the bounding main.
How the walrus-es will turn their heads and rubber
At our loving when the iceworms nest again!*

Dian Turlon, settling into her seat, had a view of the performers, two lean, good-looking young men in grey summer flannels that fitted their athletic bodies with well-tailored ease. They were seated at a table just below the raised alcove of the musicians. Tyler Kemerlee, with the banjo, she knew more or less by sight — a tall fellow with lines a woman's eyes instinctively followed; thick, red-brown hair brushed back from his forehead, where it grew in a point, and narrow, lazy-looking eyes. But the other — her blood quickened in her veins as she recognized the dark young boatman of the *Who Cares*.

He sat there singing, his eyes half-closed, supremely careless and indifferent, one long leg crossed over the other, a wineglass in his hands. His flexible mouth held Dian:

something in the way he sang certain words with *o* in them that made an upper half-moon of his white teeth.

'Who is he, Sockeye?' she asked.

'Him?' Red-faced and ungrammatical, Sockeye rose from retrieving Eve's compact that had rolled under the table. 'Why, that's Jimmy Kemerlee, our new superintendent at Sunny Cove... Ah, ha! Here comes Blossom, the people's choice, prancing in with a crock o' the oil o' joy! Shoot it right over here to papa, lady! It's moose-milk that makes the salmon run! But for the girls, Blossom, a nice fruit punch, and as soon as it comes we'll drink a libation to the Fog Woman before the next dance begins!'

When the chorus ended, men and women from every part of the room began hailing Dian. They crowded about her table to welcome her home and to be introduced to Eve Galliard, who was a mild sensation.

From the front, the dark girl was provocatively demure in delicate black lace through which her exquisite magnolia-white skin gleamed alluringly. The scant flesh-colored slip underneath was so cunningly and so revealingly contrived that Sockeye, fearfully fascinated, yet equally embarrassed, was continually dragging his eyes from her only to move them back again for another surreptitious look. The back of Eve's gown was cut in a V to the waistline.

Dian finished her drink and at the first opportunity rose intending to make her way to Ivor. But at that instant the music struck up. Couples surged out on the floor. Eve floated off with tall Lem Hanley, Chief of the Pirate Patrol. Her little upraised chin was pressed confidently against the top button of his waistcoat, while his big hand timorously explored her back for a clothed spot on which to rest. While Dian was watching them a resonant voice said:

'Now that the Montagues and Capulets are once more exchanging visiting cards, don't you think we might dance this?'

She turned eagerly to the speaker, and with a feeling of disappointment saw that it wasn't Jim Kemerlee, but his brother Tyler, who stood regarding her, a half-smile on his lips. There was a quizzical, don't-give-a-damn look in his eyes, and his finely moulded mouth was slightly bitter above his cleft chin.

Dian had no intention of dancing with a Kemerlee, but there was a disarming charm about Tyler. She glanced up at him with mock seriousness. 'Your name is not Romeo, by any chance? Then I've been warned against you, sir. But,' she smiled suddenly, 'if you'll take me over to my brother Ivor, we'll see what he has to say about it.'

They kept up an interchange of banter until they reached the musicians' alcove. While Dian talked to her brother, Tyler stood beside her, his right hand resting on the piano. It was a tanned, virile hand, so shapely that Dian noticed with a little shock, the first two joints of his little finger were gone.

Ivor was in a buoyant mood tonight. He performed miracles of syncopation that lifted the dancers' heels and carried them into wild caperings and intricate steps. And all the while his grey eyes, brilliant with interest, kept moving over the crowd. When Eve and her tall partner passed below, he said: 'Watch, Sis, how my playing galvanizes Lem Hanley into action!'

Eve, looking up from Hanley's encircling arm, smiled at the boy.

Ever since Dian had entered the room she had been acutely and, she told herself, antagonistically aware of Jim Kemerlee. Now from her point of vantage beside the piano her gaze deliberately sought him. He was dancing with a tall graceful girl from Seattle, and while Dian

chatted with Ivor and Tyler she looked him over with cool, appraising eyes seeking something to criticize.

Reluctantly she was forced to acknowledge a litheness about him, a sinuous-steel quality. It brought to her mind a line from Kipling: 'He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and looked like a lance in rest.' She caught herself watching his movements with a strange delight that was almost like pain — the symmetry of his bent dark head, the stirring masculine line of his shoulders. Then, dismayed and indignant that a Kemerlee should so affect her, she grasped suddenly at the thought of Alan. Alan was the most delightful ballroom dancer she knew. This man, lean and dark, danced with the gliding step of a pagan chief.

Deep within her Dian began looking forward to the end of the dance when the new superintendent should come to ask her for the next one. Of course he would, now that he was her father's employee. There was a hint of cruelty in her eagerness to say no to him.

But when the music began again he sought Eve for a partner.

Dian felt the hot blood sweeping through her in a flood of unreasonable resentment and outrage. The furious intensity of the emotion surprised and baffled her. What was the matter with her tonight? All at once she wanted to dance with the man more than she had ever wanted anything in her life before. Every throb of the music, every beat of the drum, made her ache for the rhythm of movement with him. Every fiber of her being hungered to tread with him that pagan measure that was so strangely his. Her body seemed to project itself against his... And he —? Could it be that he was unaware of her? Had she suddenly grown unattractive? She, who had been the center of a gay circle of men at every dance she had ever attended down South?

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She glanced toward her image in the full-length mirror near the piano. The girl in the glass looked back — a slender, high-breasted girl in floating chiffon of a pale green that made a glory of her honey-gold hair and lent her the look of one poised for flight. About her was a pleasant modern sophistication combined with a natural innocence that left her sea-grey eyes singularly lovely with the soft, wondering light of youth.

But to Dian that quick glance at herself brought only a maddening sense of frustration. Alan had told her she was adorable in the gown she wore, yet this provincial Alaskan, this fisherman, this Kemerlee, ignored her. Against her will now, her gaze moved back to him. She noted his level dark brows, the arrogance of his nose. 'I dislike the man,' she told herself fiercely. 'That's why he goads me, perturbs me.' And in a determined effort to brush him from her mind she turned to Tyler.

As he stood beside her, Tyler's manner conveyed the impression that he had forgotten every other woman in the world but herself. At the moment this was soothing to Dian's wounded pride. She looked up into his lazy, mocking blue eyes and without a word he slipped his arm about her in a possessive, yet gentle, way and they began to dance.

Tyler, shouldering away those who sought to cut in, danced twice with her in succession. Their steps were perfectly attuned and Dian knew instinctively that Tyler was a more adroit dancer than his brother. Jim Kemerlee faded from her mind. She became conscious only of an intoxicating rhythm of motion with Tyler; of his bent head and low words murmured above her ear. When she answered him she had to draw her head back to look into his face. They laughed a great deal.

No man had ever before danced with her in just Tyler's manner. He had a way of holding her with an almost im-

perceptible cradling movement, a way of strange delight — and danger. She welcomed the recklessness that swept into her blood. Suddenly she knew what her father meant when, during one of his lusty celebrations, he explained that he was only 'giving his devil a run.' That was the way Tyler Kemerlee made her feel. She caught Blossom's watchful, disapproving scowl upon Tyler, and smiled. Blossom, bless her, had a keen sense of the proprieties where Dian was concerned.

Once, when she and her partner were nearly at a standstill in a compact mass of dancers, Dian encountered Jim Kemerlee's deep eyes fixed on her. For a moment she was disturbed. Then he smiled. She forced herself to return his smile carelessly, and immediately devoted her attention to Tyler.

3

Eve, to quote Sockeye, was having the time of her life. The languid air she had worn when she entered the roadhouse vanished soon after she found herself surrounded by eager, admiring men. And she had promptly abandoned fruit punch for moose-milk. Sockeye, after watching her for a while, attempted to make clear to her that there were certain social distinctions, certain things a girl like her did not do, even in such a mixed Alaskan crowd. But Eve laughed at him. She talked and drank with everyone, and when she grew tired of dancing she wandered from table to table chatting with men who were sitting out.

Blossom, watchful in the kitchen doorway, saw her slip to a secluded corner where Red Skain lurked in the shadows.

Red, owner of the *Fort Tongass*, was a big, square-framed man who habitually went in his shirt-sleeves and for sleeve-holders wore women's round garters with a buckle

of entwined hearts. Tonight, however, he had on a coat. All evening he had sat at his remote table, his close-cropped red head, slightly bald in front, emerging above a cloud of smoke, his pale, opaque eyes sliding over the crowd. The hand that held his cigarette was strong and pulpy with a fleshy back that stood out like hardtack that had been soaked in bilge-water.

Blossom's mouth drew down at the corners when she observed Eve lean across the table and with a strange little smile light her cigarette from that of Red. When the girl sat down and began luring out the short, harsh sentences that made up Red's conversation, Blossom turned and with a jerk of her head summoned Briny from the kitchen. She gave him a poke with her plump elbow. 'Briny' — the words came guardedly from the corner of her mouth — 'Dian's little cheechako friend ain't got no business hobnobbing with Red Skain. He's a cache-robbing wolf and hard as a whore's heart. Chase over there and get her to break away.' Then, as Briny started eagerly to obey, she tweaked his sleeve and cautioned in a whisper: 'But be smooth about it. Remember he's a good customer.'

Briny made his way through the jostling crowd and paused before Red's table. With his head turned sidewise on his thin neck, he smiled ingratiatingly at the glowing-eyed Eve.

'Beg parding, Miss Galliard, I 'ate to tike you off from Red's bonzer back-chat, but there's somethin' important for you to see out in the kitching.'

'I hope,' said Eve, when she and Briny were crossing the floor, 'that you're going to make me another of those delightful drinks.'

'Smite me soul!' ejaculated Briny, delighted. 'That's just wot I was aiming for!'

Eve ensconced herself behind a little table in the kitchen and Briny began manipulating the cocktail-shaker. 'You

see I'm tossing this one up special for you, Miss Galliard. An' I'm going to fix it so it 'as a kick like a box-fighter.'

When he poured the creamy mixture into a glass, Eve gave a throaty little chuckle and patted the seat beside her. 'Pour yourself one, Briny, and sit down here beside me. I want you to tell me things.'

Briny complied with alacrity, his pale eyes shining as they moved over her exquisite, lace-draped figure. She unveiled her dazzling sapphire gaze and, with lips parted, touched her glass to that of the little man.

'Ar-r-r!' he gasped. 'Gor'struth, Miss, but you'd melt the 'eartstrings of a china dorg wen you look that way! I 'ad a girl onct' — he became garrulously confidential under her flattering smile — 'over on the China coast it were, and you remind me a lot of her. Only she were 'eavier a-beam nor you. I liked 'em 'eavy in them days; but now I goes in for the trimmer models. Yes, she were like you — just a kid when I met up wiv her. She were dark, too.'

'A half-caste, Briny? Dark blood?' There was an encouraging eagerness in Eve's voice.

'Maybe a dash of color. I dunno. But she 'ad them same eyes as you've got. The sort that ketch a feller right in the bellers wen you lamps 'im. Only 'ers was black, and 'er 'air more crinkly, maybe. Gawd!' — Briny rolled his pale orbs — 'wot a howl she put up wen my ship left! You could 'ear her carrying on the whole length of the quay, wiv me right there and the captain lookin' on!... She give me this scar on my 'ead, see?'

'Briny! How romantic!' Though Eve's words were for the little man, her interested gaze was plumbing the depths of the cocktail-shaker. 'It's very evident to me that you've always been a great favorite with women.' She held out her empty glass and Briny refilled it.

'Ar-r-r! Wimmin!' He sighed heavily and set down the

cocktail-shaker. 'I could tell you things, Miss Heve, if I was a-mind to! Gawd, wot a man like me means by coming to a fish country and settlin' down wen they is wimmin waitin' for 'im in tropic lands!... 'Course, I'm married proper now. You can see our cerstificate framed in our bedroom. So there's no use torking about it. But Blossom — now, she carn't understand. Good sort, and all, but wen a man's traveled like me, you know yourself it mikes a difference. You ain't been married none — or 'ave you, Miss Heve? No! Well, me and Blossom 'as been together a long time — too long I ——'

'Briny!' He leaped to his feet. Blossom was standing over the table, her black eyes fixed with dislike on Eve. 'On the job!' She jerked her head to indicate the other room. 'Shoot a round of moose-milk in there to Lem Hanley's table.'

Ivor came striding into the kitchen. 'Oh, here you are!' His face lighted as he saw the tiny figure in black lace. 'They've turned on the radio for a while, Eve. Will you come? I don't want to miss a minute of this dance with you.'

With indolent deliberation Eve handed her empty glass to Blossom, who glared at her and set it down with a thump.

As Ivor led his partner out to the dance floor, Blossom snorted: 'Humph!' The corners of her mouth turned down. Her scowling gaze focused on Eve. With emphatic though silent lips she began mouthing a string of potent words. The last two came out in a hoarse, torrid whisper:

'Lit-tul... bastritch!'

Dian, after dancing steadily for an hour, became uncomfortably aware of the increasing warmth of the room, the heavy, blended odor of food, liquor, perfume, damp

powder, and cigarette smoke. During an intermission when Tyler was playing for Sockeye's hornpipe, she managed to evade the attentions of half a dozen young men and slip through a side door that led into the natural garden surrounding the Floating Trap.

She followed the needle-padded trail under the spruce trees, drinking in the dusk and the freshness of green things. The cool of the night smelled of hemlock, ferns, and the running water of a creek that rippled into the channel on her right. She could hear the murmuring of couples hidden by the surrounding shrubbery.

Glad to be alone for a little while, she seated herself on a bench in the shadow of a spruce just above the beach. Before her stretched the ebon water with the golden sweep of the moon upon it. She watched a log drift slowly across the moon-path into the darkness on the other side.

Tonight, she felt herself to be caught up in some strange, elemental current, magical and adventurous, that was carrying her into — what? Why had she been so perturbed because Jim Kemerlee hadn't come near her? What had she expected? He was nothing to her. She was in love with Alan Bronson, she reminded herself. He'd be here with her in two weeks, and soon after that she would be leaving Alaska, perhaps forever. There was no room in her life for any other man but Alan.

Even as she formulated this thought, a vision of the dark young boatman of the morning flashed before her — his deep blue eyes with their look of provocative amusement, his oddly disturbing mouth with a tiny hollow above the *v* of the upper lip, his — She jerked herself up, dismayed at the vividness with which she could recall every detail of his face. Wrenching her thought back to her fiancé, she held Alan's brown comeliness in her mind.

She had received a long radiogram from him during the afternoon, and she was terribly lonely for him, she told

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herself. There was something about this June night that filled her with a sudden breathless longing for him. If he were here with her now, she felt that she would go into his arms with a new eagerness. She would return his kisses with an ardor she had never known before.

She moved restlessly on her bench, and was just deciding she'd had enough of solitude when she became aware that a couple had seated themselves on the other side of the wide elderberry hedge back of her. She had been so absorbed in her thoughts she had not noticed their coming.

'Oh-h-h... my beautiful!' The low masculine voice was young, vibrant, appealing. 'You're so little, so adorable. You make me want to go out and — fight for you... You make me have sweet thoughts — like creamy poppies in the moonlight... When you touch me with your fragile, lovely hands I — But feel, darling... That's my heart singing. That's the music you make in me. You —'

'Oh, yes... I know.' There was a slumberous impatience in the feminine voice. 'But don't talk. Just kiss me... No. Not on the cheek, honey-mouth. This way...'

Silence. Moments passing like hours. Then a gasp, and the masculine voice — could it be the same? — husky, shaking: 'God... darling...'

Dian was on her feet without knowing how she got there. She stood rigid with incredulity, apprehension, suspicion. Then she tried to wipe the whole from her mind. That couldn't be Ivor, her little brother. She had never heard Ivor's voice sound like that. And Eve — Eve undoubtedly had an experimental curiosity about men, but she would never try her tricks on a boy like Ivor, more than ten years younger than herself.

Still... All at once Dian knew she must make sure.

With the intention of moving along the path that led past the hidden couple, she started briskly forward and almost collided with a tall figure.

‘Oh! You!’ she said icily.

Jim Kemerlee stood looking down at her in the aureate dimness beneath the trees. ‘Yes,’ he answered in his deep, smooth voice. ‘Will you dance with me?’

Now that the moment of refusal to which she had looked forward had come, Dian found herself facing him in a strange beglamoured silence. She was acutely conscious of him and of herself—two magnetic beings charged with mysterious emotions and strangely akin to the wilderness about them—the trees, the clean scent of elder blossoms, the running water, the cool and liquid sounds made by early silver salmon going up two and two through the crystal darkling waters that led inland to the spawning grounds. A ray of moonlight fell on his face, and suddenly she knew that he, too, was feeling something of this. For an instant it seemed that a force powerful as hate sent the arms of their spirits reaching for each other. Then she heard herself saying with calculated indifference: ‘All my dances are promised.’

He came very close in the dusk and bent his considering gaze upon her. ‘What would you do,’ he asked in a low, compelling voice that made her heart beat faster, ‘if I took you away from one of those lucky partners?’

Dian, furious with herself for her school-girl susceptibility, managed a scornful little laugh. ‘Oh,’ she derided, ‘I’d match such b-i-g, s-t-r-o-n-g, he-man antics with the proper biting, kicking, and scratching of the reluctant female. For you see,’ she added earnestly, ‘I really don’t like you at all.’

‘No-o-o?’ There was mockery in his tones. ‘But you’re going to like me a lot—when you know me better. As for a dance—well, I can wait until then.’ He was turning to walk away when a third voice broke in laughingly:

‘What’s Jim trying to do, Miss Turlon? Pirate one of my dances?’

Startled, they both glanced up to see Tyler Kemerlee standing beside them in the twilight. He placed a hand on his brother's shoulder and the two engaged in a short, good-natured exchange of persiflage. Then Tyler took possession of Dian in his lazy, assured way, and led her back to the dance.

5

Dian plunged whole-heartedly into the merry-making. She found that her encounter with Jim Kemerlee had set her spirits soaring. Her blood leaped and sang. Everything was now as it should be. She was at rest even about Ivor, for, though she could see him nowhere in the close-packed crowd, Eve was just moving out on the floor with an entranced partner bent like a half-hoop over her.

The dance-floor was seething like a human anthill. Men and women were becoming gayer, more informal. Spectators at the tables laughingly cheered couples gyrating and singing and stamping through individualistic steps. Sockeye, all by himself, went through a comically solemn measure called 'the Bear Paw.'

Presently Ivor returned to his seat at the piano and the deep boom of the drum throbbing through his rippling notes called forth all that was untamed and reckless in Dian. Her years of careful schooling in the States dropped away from her. She became thoroughly Alaskan again. She was one with the fish people, at home, satisfied. She danced with Tyler almost continually, something in her responding to the *diablerie* she felt growing in him.

Jim had joined the non-dancing crowd in the corner — several packers, cannery officials, Sockeye, and Hanley of the Pirate Patrol. Dian, circling the room in Tyler's arms, caught snatches of their talk as she went by. They were discussing fish pirates.

After another round of the dance-floor Dian saw that

Sockeye was holding forth: 'Aw, whale-oil!' came his scoffing tones. 'Pirates are like cooties — strictly a personal matter. If a man can't protect his traps from them he deserves to lose his fish.'

Dian felt Tyler slowing his steps and in another minute both of them were standing beside the seated group joining in the laughter that was greeting Sockeye's remarks.

Jim Kemerlee, who had been listening and watching, suddenly leaned forward in his chair and joined the conversation: 'There'd be no pirates if salmon packers didn't encourage them,' he said slowly.

'How come?' belligerently demanded one of the cannery men.

'Well, you hire watchmen to protect your traps. Then you hire additional men — the Pirate Patrol — to see that the watchmen don't sell out to the pirates. On top of that you hire scouts to keep tabs on the Pirate Patrol to be sure *they* don't go in with the trap watchmen and both sell out to the pirates.'

'Cease!' yelled Sockeye, clapping both hands to his head and swaying after the manner of a comedian hit with a custard pie. 'You make me swoon!'

'But there's truth in what he says so far!' admitted the packer.

'Yes, and that's only half the farce,' continued Jim, laughing. 'Pirates steal fish from your traps. They come to your cannery to sell you those fish. You know they're offering you your own salmon, yet you're so darned afraid you won't put up a big pack you buy — pay out your own money for your own fish. Talk about comic opera! The situation has Gilbert and Sullivan backed off the boards. Yet the remedy is simple: if we'd all stick to the cannery-men's agreement and refuse to buy stolen fish, we'd have no pirates.'

'Oh, I say, Jimmy! Don't be an ass!' Tyler spoke with

his slow, sardonic smile. 'Would you do away with the pirates of Ketchikan and thus deprive our charming feminine tourists of their greatest thrill?'

'Now you're talking!' cried the young captain of a Turlon tender. 'Ever since Queen Bess knighted Drake for his plunderings, ladies have loved pirates.'

'It's not only ladies who are susceptible!' another voice broke in. 'You can't get a jury in this town to convict a pirate even after he's caught red-handed!'

'Certainly not!' agreed Tyler, laughing. 'Big oaks from little acorns grow. And in the majority of cases the fish pirate bears the same relation to the big fish packer that the salmon egg bears to the grown salmon. No cannery-man ever takes a pirate seriously.'

'That's right,' interposed Sockeye proudly. 'We fish people may rob each other, and fight each other, but by the Holy Jumped-up, when one of us runs against the law, you'll find all the rest of us standing by him.'

Dian was beginning to be bored with this somewhat complex question when Tyler put an end to all seriousness by breaking into a pirate song:

*Old Captain Kidd went after gold!
Yo ho, till I heave this line!
But we want fish to fill the hold!
Yo ho, till I heave this line!*

Couples crowded about to listen during the intermission. Dian watched Tyler's mocking gaze move from Jim Kemerlee to Hanley of the Pirate Patrol. There was a lilt and a swing and a fine lawless glamour to the words the way he sang them, and Dian's mind sang with him those lines she had learned from Eagle Turlon:

*We sail beneath the high North Star;
We know where the sleepy watchmen are:
We lift a trap — and we travel far!
Yo ho, while I heave this line!*

Then, quite to her own surprise, she found herself joining audibly in the next verse, her husky alto turning the performance into a rollicking two-part duet:

*Let lazy Bohunks guard the traps;
Yo ho, till I heave this line!
Their boss may can the fish — perhaps!
Yo ho, till I heave this line!*

There was a whispering and nudging among the spectators. Some of the older women surveyed the handsome young couple with growing disapproval. Jim Kemerlee, with elaborate unconcern, lighted a cigarette and enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke. Dian caught his eye, and, with defiance in her manner, slipped her arm inside Tyler's and swayed with him, pirate-like, as they sang the last verse:

*We're fishermen of a different kind,
We lift whatever traps we find.
And the Devil can can — what we leave behind!
Yo ho, while I heave this line!*

Red Skain leaned toward the man next to him. 'Chip off the old block — that girl,' he said, closing one eye meaningly. 'She ought to team up permanent with Tyler.'

6

A few hours later, Dian was kneeling at the open window of her bedroom, her elbows on the sill, watching the sky flush with the pink and silver of dawn.

Eve, tired from her revels, had tumbled into bed immediately on their return from the Floating Trap. She was already asleep. Ivor, yielding to Dian's coaxing, had come home with them and was now moving about in his own room getting ready for bed. But to Dian, life, for some reason she was unable to grasp, seemed suddenly to have

become so rich, so splendid, she did not want to lose an hour of it in sleep. Every atom of her being stirred with new vitality that demanded an outlet.

She looked from her window with heightened perception, feeling the friendliness of the earth and its beauty, clean and fresh and somehow innocent in the early morning light. There was a purity about everything. The channel, still and smooth, held the reflection of the shores, green, crystal-clear. Between seaward mountains the valleys were blue; along them lines of mist moved in from the ocean following where the rivers ran. She thought: 'The Fog Woman is calling her children home.' And she felt again that vague, delightful promise of all nature.

She thought of Sunny Cove at daybreak. The first rays of the sun would be gilding the waterways; would be drying the dew on the red roofs of the great white cannery buildings that came out on pilings from the shore; would be penciling with shining yellow the lofty spars of the *Star of Alaska* lying there at the dock. What happy, care-free summers she had spent at the cannery living in her mother's quarters aboard the *Star* — the cabin her father kept just as her mother had left it.

Was it possible that she would never again wake up in the wide berth there and look out the porthole to the creek where the salmon swam, head to tail, under the overhanging ferns and elder bushes? Would she never again hear the eerie morning calls of sandpipers sprinting on high little legs along the beach when the tide was low? She twisted the emerald on her finger and a faint sadness touched the buoyance of her mood.

Her musing ended as the dawn quiet was broken by the abrupt, unmuffled reports of a gas engine. Dian recognized the distinctive rhythm — Sockeye's *Gas Gulper*. The foreman was getting an early start for Sunny Cove and, she remembered all at once, taking the new superintendent

with him. The launch came in sight and moved down the channel below her. She could see Jim Kemerlee at the wheel... speeding out of her life. Her antagonism for him seemed strangely softened now. She even hoped he would look up so that she might wave him good-bye. But he did not.

The noisy cruiser passed out of sight, and all at once the world seemed very still. Dian realized, with a singular sense of loneliness, that something had gone from her, something she might never know again.... She felt the glamour of the morning begin to fade.

Her thought moved lingeringly over the thirty-six hours she had been home. They were so crammed with events she seemed to have lived a year.... It was good to live that way. Swiftly. Keenly. And she had but two weeks of such freedom before Alan came. She wanted him to come, but...

Suddenly she acknowledged that undercurrent that had been just below all her thoughts ever since her morning cruise in the *Golden Hind*. Why not live her two weeks without regard to consequences? Why not seize every hour left her of this Northern summer that was so beautiful — and so brief? Why not fill those hours with experiences that would furnish her with memories — after December?

She came to her feet and stood before her dressing-table. With thoughtful eyes on a handsome photograph of Alan Bronson, she began twisting the emerald on her slim hand. Then, with an air of decision, she slipped it off and laid it away in her jewel-case.

'It's only until you come, darling,' mentally she addressed the man gazing at her from the tooled and gilded Italian leather frame. 'Only until you come —' She caught up the picture, kissed it with unaccountable fervor, then held it off with both hands. 'After that — I'll go back to your country. I'll live your life.'

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A moment later, when she returned to the window she felt a warm elation coursing through her. 'Hello, day!' She spoke joyously under her breath to the sun streaming in. Then she turned and went quickly into Eve's room.

'Eve! Wake up!' She shook the small figure gently. 'We're going to ——'

'Oh, for Heaven's sake!' Eve raised a petulant little face from which the make-up had not been removed. 'Get away from me. I wanna sleep ——'

'Oh, I know I'm a beast, honey. I know you could kill me, but it's morning, and we're going on a glorious adventure. We're going to get aboard the *Golden Hind* and move, bag and baggage, over to Sunny Cove!'

CHAPTER FOUR

I

DIAN woke, stretched her lithe young body, and snuggled her golden head back among the pillows again.

She was lying in the wide berth in her mother's cabin aboard the *Star of Alaska* alongside the dock at Sunny Cove. The room was just as it had been ever since she could remember, a place of white enamel and Honduran mahogany, seasoned by years of salt air and hand polishing. The brass, burnished to a mellow gold, was worn down until the screw-eyes were flush with the metal. Smoothly gold, too, were the rings about the portholes through which the early morning light lanced in on comfortable upholstered chairs in chintz covers of saffron and cream and olive-green, and glinted on the bright fittings of the drawers under the couch.

Dian remembered how she and Ivor, when they were very little, had always been tied into this berth for safety on those April trips north when the *Star* battled gallantly through storms that beset her in the wild Gulf of Alaska.

Impressions from those glorious days of sailing came back to her: Wind keening through the rigging and green seas thundering over the deck... days of calm and sun, with fair-weather delights: the creaking of blocks as the billowing canvas pulled high above the slanting deck where she played... sailors off watch, sitting on the hatches whittling out tiny ships which they later inserted into whiskey bottles for her... Briny Dow smuggling delicious indigestibles to her from the galley... the cannery crews singing devil-may-care songs while the *Star of Alaska*, full before the wind, buried her forefoot into an Aleutian sunset.

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Dian lay thinking happily of these things until sounds of increasing activity on the docks outside began to penetrate her musings. Shouted directions. Quick thumping of feet. Blasts of whistles. Shrill tooting of launches. All at once she remembered that this was July 5th, the first day of legal fishing; the day for which Sunny Cove, together with every other cannery in the district, had been preparing for months. The tenders were going out to the traps for the initial haul.

They were off on the thrilling annual race to put up the pack.

She bounded out to the middle of the room, a slender, pyjama-clad figure in pale green, and with the back of her hand brushed the thick, fair hair from her face as she hurried through the open door that led to the next state-room where Eve lay asleep.

'Eve! The tenders are shoving off! Come on deck with me to wave them luck with the fish!'

Eve raised her dark head and stared a moment with lovely, sleep-filled eyes. '*Fiiiish?*' she ejaculated, in a high, thin voice. 'Ug-g-g-g!' She took her small nose between thumb and forefinger, made a wry mouth, and with a flop turned her back to burrow into her pillows.

Dian, laughing, flung a cushion at her and skipped back to her own room. She thrust her narrow feet into mules, wrapped herself in a Chinese robe of jade-green silk, and hastened out on deck.

It was a still, silver-and-green morning; sunless, but softly bright with the quiet platinum light of Northern summer. Low in the valleys of the seaward islands tongues of fog licked inland. Level-hanging clouds lopped off the tops of the timbered mountains. The inlet lay like a mirror reflecting earth and sky. And there was a keen, adventurous smell of forest and salt water.

Dian was only in time to see the last tug, the *Thlinget*

Chief, move from the dock and fall in behind two others already cleaving furrows down the placid channel. Her keel-loving heart stirred as she watched that parade of modern, efficient, seagoing craft, snow-white and gay with the orange-and-green trim of the Turlon Packing Company. Hanging like a banner from the hoisting boom high on each mast was the brailer used to dip salmon from the traps — a twenty-five-foot rectangle of webbing stained jade by copper oleate and weighted with bright chains. Made fast to the side of each tug rode an immense fish-scow painted vermilion. Members of the lifting crews, strong, bareheaded young fishermen, leaped about decks making rope-ends secure and coiling lines. And the white-jacketed cooks added a jolly, homey touch by standing, each one in his galley door, fluttering a dishtowel.

Dian ran aft as far as she could and stood on the deck, an exotic green-and-gold figure, one hand holding her robe about her, the other raised high and waving with an enthusiasm that drew her to her tiptoes. The colorful pageant moved down the channel to the shouted raillery and good wishes of the canning crew clustered on the dock.

Involuntarily Dian's eyes searched the *Thlinget Chief*, the superintendent's tug, although she knew she would not see Jim Kemerlee's tall figure. For two days now he had been out in his own high-powered, open-cockpit cruiser, *River Mist*, making the rounds of the traps. His job was to find fish enough to put up the ninety thousand cases of salmon guaranteed by the Turlon plant in the summer labor contracts. Since the Government permitted a season of only thirty-six fishing days in which to do this, he was taking no chances of losing a moment of this opening day.

After the tenders had vanished around the bend, Dian turned to watch the canning crew drift away to their various quarters on shore. There was nothing they could do now until the tugs returned with fish.

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They were a picturesque, motley crowd, distinctively of the salmon industry. White men in coveralls of their trades — canmakers, subforemen, boxmakers, engineers, firemen, and machine-men. Old Chinese bosses grown grey in her father's service shuffling along in foreign, white-soled slippers; young Filipinos, neat in gay caps and sweaters. Fat, good-natured squaws in mother hubbards and shawls; their pretty, mission-schooled daughters rouged and bob-haired and incongruously jaunty in overalls and high-heeled slippers. Dian waved and called greetings to many of them she had known since childhood.

Sockeye Jones, she noted with a smile, was running true to form. Frowning fiercely under his ridiculous but scrupulously clean little hat, he loped up and down the dock, his tongue imprisoned in one corner of his mouth, his hands clenched on the small of his back. Though everything under his expert supervision was in readiness, the beginning of the season invariably found Sockeye in a state of nerves. He either paced the dock or sat alone in the cabin of his *Gas Gulper* wringing lugubrious tunes from an old accordion while he waited for the return of the tenders.

Dian, on the stern deck of the *Star*, leaned with her back against the great, unhoused wheel, while her eyes moved over the familiar scene with an appreciation that had in it a hint of farewell. Here on the wooded shore of an inlet in the midst of the wilderness lay the pride of the Turlons: Sunny Cove, a white-painted, red-roofed, sanitary little city sufficient unto itself. A city for a season, with electricity, a water system, a wireless station, machine-shops, commissary, bath-houses, tennis-courts, and every possible comfort for its two hundred inhabitants.

On the dock below stood two immense buildings that housed the Iron Chinks and other packing machinery, the most modern and efficient made. Farther on was the can-

and-box warehouse filled with re-forming lines, crates of collapsed tins and box-shocks which were even now being made into cans and cases for receiving the pack. In a grove of hemlock saplings on shore were the cottages of cannery officials, lawns and flower-beds quaintly fenced with fishnet.

Topping a knoll that rose abruptly from the water the Superintendent's House stood alone, its wide verandas with boxes of nasturtiums making a splash of color above the native shrubbery.

There was a large barracks and cookhouse for the white crew, and another, called the China-House, for the Orientals. Already, from the upper story of the latter came the strumming of an ukulele, the slither of a steel guitar. Dian recognized the duet as the music of Primo and Augustine, the Damon and Pythias of the Filipino crew. Several dark, grinning faces popped out of the windows to call to some Indian girls passing self-consciously on the path below — the beginnings of those fierce inter-racial love affairs that marked each summer season.

The brown girls were on their way to the native quarters, a row of cabins built farther along the beach. There in the open doorways squatted meditative old squaws and bucks oblivious of the blare of phonographs and the fat Indian babies and puppies tumbling together at their feet.

Dian was proud of Sunny Cove and what it stood for: a splendid unit of a mighty Alaskan industry. And a happy place. Here, for ten years, her father had ruled, a kindly, albeit a somewhat feudal lord, his wealth supporting the white, yellow, and brown people who gladly returned year after year to work during the short salmon season. Here the loyal labor of these people made his wealth possible. And here, he and they, a Northern brotherhood of the sea, united to garner the silver harvest

that gave to the world a food rich in the vital properties of the ocean from which it came.

The thought that she was a part of all this filled Dian with quiet exultation. She stood erect, breathing in the pure morning air. 'Oh, my clean, fruitful land of rivers and the sea! Waters of crystal! Waters of jade!' She spoke softly aloud, but the words in no way expressed the thing that moved her: that indwelling poetry which the country itself seemed always about to make clear to her. It was something so exquisite, her earth-ears could never quite catch it — like the soundless trumpet music a sunset draws from the rose-white peak of St. Elias. Or the inaudible woodwind note that calls across the purple of a tundra dawn.

2

Hunger at last turned Dian into her cabin to dress for breakfast.

When she emerged half an hour later, she had on one of her tramping costumes, time-honored but worn, nevertheless, with an air of slender distinction. Her jacket was of thistle-green suede above a short wool skirt of the same shade. Her field boots, of fine Russian leather, were custom made. Her fair hair was tucked up under a green *béret* that lent a pixie touch to her face. Ivor, who came bounding up the gangplank just as she reached it, stifled her in an admiring hug, then held her off at arms' length.

'I say, Sis!' he exclaimed. 'You look like some little green thing that lives under a fern!' He was bareheaded, sweated in white, and his thick blond hair was still damp from his shower.

'That's a doubtful compliment, dear,' Dian smiled. 'I can see that you've come to take me to breakfast,' she added mischievously, knowing well that he hadn't. His

impatient, grey eyes were already searching the deck around and beyond her.

‘Isn’t Eve up yet?’

‘She is not, me lad. She still slumbers. And if you wait for her, you’ll be eating brunch instead of breakfast.’

Ivor shoved his hands into the pockets of his corduroys. ‘Oh, w-e-l-l... I’m not hungry anyway. You run along and eat, Dian. I’ll take a stroll up the beach until — er — oh, for an hour or so.’

She watched him cross the dock before she walked on to breakfast. Ivor was living with Jim Kemerlee at the Superintendent’s House, where Dian and Eve were served their meals. But she knew her brother’s presence at Sunny Cove was not due to any interest in the fishing season. He had come because of Eve, and his days were regulated by Eve’s whims. Dian saw little of the two. The situation filled her with uneasiness.

Over her lonely meal she thought about Eve, who had shown little evidence of a broken heart since she left California. Why couldn’t the girl have gone visiting with some of her closer friends, the Rex Langdons, for instance? They were to leave for Honolulu the day after Dian started for the North. Then she remembered that Eve had gone in for some rather heavy flirting with Rex at a winter house party, and Peggy Langdon had never invited her anywhere since. Now — Eve was here!

Dian drew up one corner of her mouth in a half-rueful, half-humorous little smile. Eve at an Alaskan salmon cannery was more than an anachorism; she bordered on being an anachronism! And with her propensity for amatory research, she was potent with calamity — for someone. But, Dian concluded, it was foolish to be borrowing trouble.

After she had finished her coffee and toast, she left the dining-room to make the rounds of the Indian quarters and

visit the old Chinese cook at the Oriental mess-house. It was more than two hours later when she returned to the *Star*. The docks were deserted. Even Sockeye had disappeared; but the strains of 'The Curse of an Aching Heart' came up, long-drawn and sorrowful, from the cabik of the *Gas Gulper* moored at the float. There was the crying of gulls, the melancholy croaking of ravens. Everywhere about the cannery she felt an atmosphere of uncertainty and dogged waiting which would continue until the return of the tenders. It occurred to Dian that now was the time to take a tramp up the creek trail into her favorite woods.

When she entered her cabin to get a pair of gloves, Eve's petulant, accusing voice greeted her from the next room:

'Di — an! Where have you been? I've been so lone-ly!' Dian found her guest propped up in her berth puffing so furiously on a cigarette that the flaming red of her night pyjamas was obscured by smoke. 'Why is it as quiet as a graveyard? Where are all the men?'

'Don't you remember? I told you hours ago that the tenders went out to the traps this morning, Eve. The fishing season's on, you know.'

'Ivor didn't go?' The question came quickly without a trace of Eve's usual deliberation. 'He hates fish. Don't tell me you talked him into going, too?'

Dian was silent a moment. 'No,' she said finally. 'Ivor's still here.'

'He must be hiding, then. I went out on deck awhile ago and I couldn't see him anywhere. Where is he?'

'He went up the beach for a walk — a long walk,' Dian answered shortly. 'I'm going for a hike myself. I'll have the cook's boy bring you something to eat and then you can go back to sleep.'

'I can't sleep.' Eve crushed her cigarette down into an ashtray with fingers that were unsteady. 'There's some-

thing about this damned place that upsets me.' She swung her little bare feet to the floor and sat staring with wide, unseeing eyes at nothing. But after a short interval she spoke in her usual slow way: 'Hand me another smoke, like a good child. And please order breakfast, Dian. I'll dress and we'll find Ivor.'

Perversely, Dian didn't want Eve for company on the brisk walk she meant to take. Neither did she want Eve to find Ivor. Then, a little ashamed of these inhospitable impulses, she herself went to the cook and ordered a special breakfast. She came back to the *Star* to help Eve get into suitable garments for the outing.

This proved to be impossible, for, despite Dian's protests, Eve insisted on wearing a frock of thin white silk, a pair of scarlet sandals, and no hat. And when the boy arrived with her tray, she wrinkled her short nose at the food and breakfasted on coffee and cigarettes.

By the time the two girls left the ship, the clouds overhead had merged evenly in a vast, pearl-grey canopy that hid the sky and lent a hushed brooding to land and water.

Eve glanced uneasily about. 'How still it is,' she observed.

'It will rain after a while. That's why I wanted you to wear a hat and coat.' Dian was leading the way past the can-and-box warehouse, heading for the mouth of the stream just beyond.

Eve followed, tottering and flinging her arms as she tried to maintain her balance when her little sandals slipped on the beach stones. She called: 'Are you sure Ivor came this way?'

Dian didn't answer.

A few minutes' walk took them out of sight of the cannery. Though aware that her brother had gone straight on up the beach, Dian turned in through a small grove of alders and kept to a trail that skirted the creek. Almost

at once the untouched forest, fresh and dustless, closed about her and her companion.

This was the first time Dian had been to the woods since her return. Eagerly she drew in the moist redolence of earth and growing plants and water running over stones. Her eyes lingered on the straight grey trunks of spruce and cedar that rose from beds of fern to disappear overhead in the lacery of their own intermingling boughs. As she walked, she felt again the enchantment that dwells in Alaskan forests, for even on this somber day there was an elfin golden light beneath the great trees. It came from the beryl-green of huckleberry and wild apple; from old logs felted with pale-gold moss in which grew hundreds of tiny, soft spruce seedlings; from open spaces, boggy little meadows vividly emerald and tufted with low white flowers of ground dogwood and maidenhair fern and amazing big toadstools of vermilion, and saffron, and violet.

'Di—an!'... Eve's voice broke through the sylvan spell... 'You're walking too fast for me. Come back. I must rest.'

Reluctantly, Dian returned to the log where she found Eve peering into the mirrored lid of a vanity compact as she carefully applied a lipstick to her small, half-open mouth. Dian threw herself full length on the log and watched her for a moment — Eve, vivid and little: thin white silk, scarlet sandals; magnolia-white face, scarlet lips, and smooth, ebon hair sweeping back to curl like a plume into her neck. Wondering why the girl's nearness made it impossible for her to feel the presence of the forest again, Dian turned her eyes away.

Not a breath of wind stirred the leaves. The recurrent lyric of a hermit thrush spilled through the waiting stillness. The fern-bordered stream across the trail made low talking sounds almost like words. The water glassed clear over great white stones, eddied about boulders, swirled

into patterns of foam, and flowed on like liquid amber over the sandy stretches.

Eve shoved her compact into a small garter pocket. 'Are you quite sure Ivor came this way?' she asked, moving her sleek black head this way and that as her eyes searched the trail ahead. Dian, struck by something curiously febrile in her manner, sat up. A quick, inexplicable irritation moved her to sharp speech. 'Look here, Eve! I wish you'd leave Ivor alone.'

'Leave Ivor a — Why, hon-ney! What do you mean?' Eve's eyes were so blankly blue, so widely vacant, that Dian, despite herself, began to feel apologetic. But she went on firmly:

'Let's be frank for once, Eve. You know very well that Ivor, boylike, imagines himself in love with you. Of course it's perfectly ridiculous, considering there's more than ten years' difference in your ages. Still, it might not be so bad if — if you weren't such a heartless little flirt, Eve. But he —' Dian stopped; then finished bluntly: 'Ivor's my kid brother. He has ideals about love. I want him to keep them as long as he can . . . Don't hurt him, Eve.'

Eve flicked a glance from under her long, beaded lashes. 'Don't try to be quaint with me, old dear! Ideals!' She lifted her chin in a throaty little laugh. 'No one has ideals about love these days.' She waited a moment. When no response came, her manner changed. She reached out and took one of Dian's slim, tanned hands. 'Does big sister really think I have to rob the Turlon cradle for an admirer?' she crooned, rubbing her soft cheek against Dian's suddenly stiffening fingers. '*That*, for your funny suspicions!' She left a light kiss in Dian's palm.

'Of course,' she continued with an air of candor, 'Ivor might possibly fall in love with me, but whatever made you think I'd encourage the youngster? I've never en-

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couraged any man, Dian. Can I help it if they are continually making idiots of themselves about me?' She flung out both tiny hands and shrugged her silken shoulders.

Dian, knowing from past experience, that Eve was launched on her favorite topic, did not answer.

'Really and truly, I have more trouble with men, Dian!' the incongruously deep voice continued. 'Especially married men. You remember last winter when we all went to Tahoe Tavern for the week-end with Roger and Betty Lake? What a hectic trip! Roger simply — well, he went off his head about me, that's all. I was frightened to death Betty would notice and never invite me on a party again. The last night we were there was the worst. He insisted on dancing with me every other dance.'

Eve smiled reminiscently and made a slow, sinuous movement with her body. 'Did you ever feel a man's legs tremble when he danced with you, Dian?' The question came with remembering softness. 'But no,' she answered herself, 'you wouldn't. You're not the magnetic type that affects men.... Anyway, just before I went up to bed I found myself without a cigarette in my case. I simply can't go to sleep without I have a last smoke, you know, so I asked Roger to bring me a package later.

'He brought them. But, my dear! I thought I'd have to call the manager to get him out! You can't imagine such a cave man! I never was so outraged in my life! "Roger! Roger!" I kept pleading with him. "You mustn't say such things to me! Remember," I said, "you're a married man. The husband of one of my best friends!" But do you know, honey, he just seized me and tore ——',

'I know,' interrupted Dian hastily. Her code did not permit a discussion of her amatory adventures, and, though she contrived not to show it, she never failed to

experience a certain embarrassment when Eve detailed her encounters on the field of what she termed love. 'You told me something about that last winter.'

'Such a brutal attack,' continued Eve, with the utmost complacency. 'But I managed to elude him. And — But let's talk about your Alaska men, Dian. They're — well, a bit different, aren't they? Have you noticed that they want to put a woman on a pedestal, or something? Or maybe,' she went on thoughtfully, 'they're just naturally a cold-blooded lot. Take Jim Kemerlee. Isn't he a distant, handsome devil, though?... Still... he might be human... under certain circumstances. I wonder what he's really like,' she speculated, tearing a blossom from a thimble-berry cane and crushing it in her little hand. 'Maybe he's one of those Robert Browning lovers with two — two —'

'Two soul sides, I suppose you mean.' Dian grinned and quoted: "'One to face the world with, and one to show a woman when he loves her.'"

Eve nodded. 'That's it. But Tyler — a-h-h-h! Tyler's different. He knows the score.' She laughed low to herself. 'He really thrilled me the other night at the Floating Trap when he was singing. Oh, not one of those vulgar fish songs, but "Neapolitan Nights."' Eve's eyes were now like blue jewels beneath her low white forehead. 'Of course, Tyler has no voice to speak of, but there's something distinctly fascinating about it. Something — well, decadent. Like the tiredness one hears in Hawaiian voices.... He was singing to me that night, Dian. Standing there by the piano, so tall, with that cleft in his chin. Don't you love it when they have clefts in their chins? I could actually feel his eyes on me. And, oh-oh-oh-oh! The way the creature sang!' Eve, clasping her upraised knees in her arms, tilted back her head and sang in unmistakable imitation of Tyler Kemerlee:

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*Oh, nights of splendor,
Your charms so tender,
Make love surrender,
Till stars are gone.
Oh, nights of laughter,
Though tears come after,
Love regrets, Love forgets,
When comes the dawn.*

'Oh-h-h!' Eve's voice trembled. She closed her eyes, raised her shoulders, and with a gesture of abandon drew her clasped hands to her breast. 'He made me feel as if I'd spent a night of love with him and he, careless and indifferent, was going away from me forever leaving me broken-hearted!' The effect of this impassioned declaration was somewhat marred when Eve, with immediate calmness, reached into her pocket for a cigarette.

Dian restrained an impulse to laugh. Eve's dramatics had always been amusing, she remembered, even during University days. Then Dian had thought of the girl as a rather likable mixture of child and sophisticate, one who lived intensely things that never happened and remained curiously wooden to realities that stirred others to the depths. Now, she assured herself, Eve had not changed. Of course the little rascal required some man to try her wiles on, but since Tyler Kemerlee had made such an impression on her, adolescent Ivor could mean little in her plans for masculine conquest.

Dian felt relieved.

Eve continued to talk about Tyler until Dian said laughingly: 'Do you know what's happened to you? You've fallen under the spell of the salmon run!'

'Now, darling,' drawled the other, 'don't try to tell me that men and women in your country are influenced by the fish run.'

'Well — they say it's a fact, Eve. Maybe it isn't the run, exactly, but it's something that comes during that

time — a stimulus that stirs unwonted desires: something electric in the air, in the water, in the very winds. I've never felt it myself, but I've been hearing about it ever since I can remember. A sort of midsummer madness comes over people — especially newcomers from the South like yourself. During this season the most faithful wives suddenly leave their husbands for someone else. Men shoot each other over women they wouldn't look at any other time. And the cannery girls — some of them — why, they try to tear each other to pieces over lovers they forget two months later.'

Eve brought herself upright on the log, her cornflower eyes wide. Her cigarette had gone out. 'Really, Dian?' She shivered ecstatically. 'That's frightfully intriguing! How does it — tell me something about it — this salmon run.'

Dian was pleased. Perhaps if she could interest Eve in the run, it might keep her out of mischief.

Resting her elbows on her knees Dian dropped her chin on her interlaced fingers and began slowly: 'It's the most powerful, the most valiant, the most mysterious thing the North knows, Eve.'

She paused a moment, and her grey eyes took on a look of vision that extended far beyond the boundaries of Alaska.

'Each spring, deep in the unknown pastures of southern seas, fin multitudes of slim, shining salmon — the ocean roamers, the wide-swimming vagabonds that were hatched, according to species, two, and four, and five years before in Alaskan streams. Suddenly, in some mystic manner, they hear the vernal call of their natal waters thousands of miles away. It is a summons, imperative, irresistible, that draws them back to spawn in the very rivers where they began their strange life-cycle.

'Simultaneously, millions and millions of silver fish

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surge up from the waving green safety at the bottom of the sea. Every pointed head swings north. And the vast host presses forward on the most hazardous, the most dramatic journey undertaken by any of the migratory creatures.

'Hazardous? Dramatic?' questioned Eve.

Dian nodded. 'There isn't a moment when Death in one form or another isn't stalking them.'

There was a soft brilliance in her eyes; a look of flight on her fair Nordic face. Her slim hands gestured as her words pictured the run sweeping up the Pacific Coast beset by enemies — voracious seals, sea-lions, sharks. Pictured the salmon darting through wave-worn channels between Alaskan islands, hiding behind swaying seaweed; fighting, fleeing, pursuing, and pursued, yet always moving northward in response to Nature's inexorable law that decrees they shall seek their natal waters to mate.

'To mate!' repeated Eve wonderingly. Under the thin white silk of her blouse her small, firm breasts rose and sank with her quickened breathing. 'Go on, Dian. Tell me more. Don't any of them turn back to the safety of their ocean?'

'Not one. It's tremendous, mystifying, that force which drives them on despite every danger and obstacle! Wait till you see them, Eve. Millions "schooling up" at the mouths of their parent streams, finning and leaping and flashing in the sun — while flocks of screaming gulls swoop down trying to pluck out their eyes.

'Those that elude their salt-water enemies have to run the gantlet of our man-made devices on the fishing grounds — the nets of the seiners, the deadly leads of the big traps. Escaping these, they enter their birth-streams. But even here pitiless Nature offers no sanctuary to the homing salmon. Once in fresh water, they never eat again. Yet they must breast the swift current, plunge upward through

rock-spiked rapids, wriggle their way over treacherous shallows.

‘When they are thus helplessly exposed, huge bears, brown and black, come lumbering out of the woods and with mighty sweeps of their paws bat the fish out onto the banks. They keep on, apparently for the sport of the thing, long after they have eaten their fill. At the same time, eagles, dozens of them at once, drop down from the tall trees and rise again, each with a living salmon struggling in its talons.

‘The carnival of Death continues, but the fasting salmon fight onward, heroic, undaunted. Not even the waterfalls stop them, Eve! Imagine: a foaming, roaring cataract pouring down from a twenty-foot ledge, and those valiant creatures launching themselves into the battering wall of water. They leap up, and fall back. Leap up and fall back ——’

‘And never give up, Dian?’

‘Never! Each one keeps trying until it either scales the falls or is beaten to death in the attempt. The marvel of it is that any of them live to reach the upper streams where they were spawned. But they do —— See!’ She broke off, pointing across the trail to a fern-shaded pool agitated by mysterious flashings of platinum and shadowy green. ‘There are a few of the very early salmon going up ——’

‘Where?’ Eve leaped from the log to the edge of the creek. ‘Show me!’ she demanded, a strange excitement in her voice as she bent to peer into the water. ‘Oh! I see them! Look, Dian! Going up two and two! Two and two!’ Eve Galliard, who had always loathed exertion and wet feet, suddenly started on a splattering run along the margin of the stream, catching up stones to fling them viciously at the fish. ‘I’ll show you whether you’ll turn back or not!’ Her laughter shrilled oddly above the splashing of the frantic salmon darting ahead of her.

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'Hi! Hi! Take *that!*' She flung another stone. 'Watch me hit them, Dian! Watch them squirm and go!'

'Eve! Stop it!' Dian called out sharply. Once when she was ten she had given an Indian boy the trouncing of his life when she came upon him stoning salmon for fun. 'Stop it, do you hear? Come back on the trail!' She was now running along the path after Eve. 'Come back here! I'll take you to a place farther up where we can watch them without getting wet.'

After repeated efforts she succeeded in drawing the other girl out of the creek.

The two went on until Dian came to a spot where the water flowed quietly under a bridging log, golden-mossed and shaggy with little ferns. She made her way out to the middle of it and lay flat on her stomach, her chin propped in the cup of her upturned palms. Eve, facing her, did likewise. In this position they could look down on either side to watch the salmon moving above the gravelly bottom.

There were barely fifty fish in the clear waters below — forerunners of that multitude that would later be fighting up toward the headwaters to deposit their eggs. 'A few always spawn here,' Dian explained. 'See, Eve! Just below you! That pair of strong, triumphant swimmers! They're preparing for the last great act in their life-drama!'

Eve, wide-eyed and silent for the moment, followed Dian's pointing finger to a silver-red male with a fighting hooked jaw, and his mate, smaller and more delicately formed. The male was energetically digging a hole in the gravel with his tail.

When the hole was deep enough to suit him, he waited motionless while the female moved up and inspected it. Apparently she didn't approve of his work, for she swam on upstream.

'Oh!' came Eve's hushed tones, 'she's turned him down!'

The male darted forward, and a moment later was swimming back and forth in front of the female as if trying to persuade her to reconsider. His persistence was successful; she returned with him and after another scrutiny of the hole dusted it out with her tail.

But the instant she began dropping her orange-colored eggs into the small depression, she, who had escaped a hundred alien enemies, was besieged by those of her own kind. Another female rushed her to do battle for the nest. Her mate, too, was immediately put to it to fight off savage males who sought to usurp his place.

Dart! Splash! Strike! Whirl!

'Oh! They're all blotted out!' breathed Eve, leaning over to watch the fierce tumult of sand, gravel, and eddying water shot through by gleams of silver. 'What's going to happen now, Dian? Tell me! Tell me!'

'The female must fight off her attackers before she can deposit her eggs. And her mate must vanquish his rivals before he can pass over the spawn, fertilize it, and cover it with his tail. Then the two will move up a short distance and begin a new hole and a new battle to lay another batch. Think of it, Eve, they'll have to keep up the struggle until the female deposits her four thousand eggs!'

'Four thousand eggs!' exclaimed Eve incredulously.

Dian nodded. 'But because so many things prey upon them, only a dozen or so will develop to maturity. You'd think when this terrific spawning is over, the pair would have earned a rest. But no! Nature demands that the remainder of their short lives be spent protecting their eggs from the sleek, wily salmon-trout that lie under the banks waiting to raid the nests and devour the spawn. The salmon dies as he has lived — fighting to insure the

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continuance of his kind. Not a single one lives to swim back to his ocean. And ——'

A surprising wild splashing up the creek brought the girls to their feet. 'Another battle!' shrieked Eve enthusiastically. She ran along the log to the bank and started toward the scene of the disturbance.

Dian followed.

They came to a gravel bar in which was a pool connected with the main stream by a narrow channel. Two male salmon, after fighting in deeper water, had forced each other up into this arena and were now finishing their combat with a fury that held the two girls spellbound.

Like shining torpedoes they came together churning the pool to froth as they bit and smote each other with blows of their powerful tails. A moment's respite... a swift, wary circling of the pond... then, open-mouthed, they again launched themselves at each other. Their jaws, narrow, needle-toothed, crossed, clamping fish to fish. Their fiercely arching bodies writhed out into the air. Their tails flayed the water with pistol-like reports.

Inch by inch they fought toward the edge of the pool.

When they lay on the shallows, jaws still locked, bodies half-exposed, they began flapping with a new, desperate strength, each trying to push the other all the way out on dry land. First one fish was on the gravel, then the other; their jaw-grip holding with bulldog tenacity through it all.

But after a time, incredibly long, the violence of their struggles began to wane. Gradually their efforts grew weaker until both salmon lay side by side, spent, quivering. Slowly their gasping jaws relaxed. They fell apart.

'Finis!' crowed Eve, clapping her hands.

But even as she spoke, the enfeebled fish wriggled back into deeper water. They lay a few moments recovering strength; then rushed each other with renewed ferocity.

'Come on, Eve. Let's get away from here,' suggested

Dian, faintly ill and bewildered, as she always was when she witnessed the workings of that tremendous force which at this season so cruelly rode the creatures of the wilderness. 'Those salmon will fight all day. They'll grow weaker and weaker until they drown together in the shallows, their jaws still fast in a grip that will hold after death sends their bodies floating back to the sea.'

But Eve made no motion to leave. 'Wouldn't it be glorious' — her voice was tense, deep — 'if men would fight over women that way!'

Dian heard but did not answer. She kept moving toward the trail.

During the past half-hour she had noticed a lessening of the light in the surrounding forest, a marked poignancy to the smells of earth and water. The air had lost its vital quality. No birds were singing now, and even the rippling *oi-oi-oi* of the creek seemed oddly hushed. Over the wilderness lay that waiting pause that precedes summer rain, a pause freighted with a subtle, unsettling excitement.

She became aware that an inexplicable restlessness had been growing in her; a waiting restraint blended with impatience. 'Are you coming, Eve?' she called, turning to see what was keeping her companion.

Eve was standing near the edge of the pool intent on the two salmon feebly fighting toward their death. Her small dark head was thrust forward. Her eyes were narrowed above a peculiar, tight-lipped smile; her extended hands with their red-lacquered nails were little claws slowly expanding and contracting.

A wave of revulsion swept Dian. She recalled the scene of an hour ago: Eve, white-clad, delicately grotesque, splashing upstream stoning frantic salmon.... The wilderness had brought out something indefinably repellent in Eve. Or was it possible that she, Dian, was becoming unduly critical of her guest?

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She was weighing this in her mind when Eve suddenly caught up a sharp rock, flung it, and laughed when it tore a pink gash in one of the struggling fish. An instantaneous, nameless fury sent Dian leaping forward. She seized both the dark girl's wrists. 'Stop, you little beast!' she cried tensely. 'If they are to die, let them die in their own way!'

'Why, Di—an!' Eve's upraised eyes were wide and frightened in her small white face. 'What is the matter with you? You're hurting me,' she whimpered. 'I really didn't — didn't mean to hit anything. I — I — was just trying to make them quit fighting, and — and ——' Ready tears misted her blue eyes. Her chin was quivering like a child's.

Dian released her hold feeling again that she had been hasty, foolish. She was just about to begin an apology when a yodel came sifting through the forest — Ivor's own particular call. Eve dashed the tears from her eyes and eagerly turned her face toward the distant, invisible beach whence the sound continued to come.

'Oh! Ivor didn't come this way, after all!' Quickly Eve drew out her compact, powdered her nose and made up her lips. 'He's calling me, Dian. Never mind coming with me, darling. And — I'm awfully sorry about the fish. Honest.' She lifted her face and left a swift, soft kiss on Dian's cheek. 'Bye, hon-ney! I'll see you later.' Her little scarlet sandals went flashing down the trail in the direction of Ivor's voice.

Dian started to follow, then checked herself. After all, she decided, she had better be alone for a while.

She turned again into the path that skirted the stream and went deeper into the woods seeking that tranquillity which, in former years, had attended her forest rambles. Always, when she walked alone, she summoned in imagination some loved one to be her shadowy companion — her father or Ivor. Now Alan should come to her and

share her thoughts. As she had appreciated with him the golden, oak-dotted hills of his native California, so now he should walk beside her through her beloved forest — the way he would walk in reality before a fortnight had passed.

She pictured him against the green of the trail: his smart outing clothes, his cap set at just the right angle, his brown eyes moving in admiration over the tropical luxuriance of this Alaskan wilderness; his surprised look answering her when she told him that only two months ago the snow had lain here three feet deep.... How swift, how powerful was the tide of life that coursed through the Northern world! She could almost see it at work about her in the lush green fruit forming on black currant and salmon-berry bushes; in the strong fern-fronds uncurling.... The strips of sand along the creek were stippled with dainty hoofprints of does and fawns. Threadlike trails along the mossy backs of logs told of the presence of mink and their litters. Areas of flattened vegetation registered the passing of bears bringing their cubs down to drink.... And on round the next bend in the creek lay that long stretch of cranberry bog across which one could look to the mountains. There, high on the crags, wild goats stood with their kids gazing out over the seaward islands. What a land this was — young, fruitful, prodigal in its abundance.

Dian brought herself up with a start of dismay. She realized suddenly that she was not thinking these thoughts to Alan. Her fiancé had been thrust from her mind by another imaginary presence. She was as conscious of the intruder as if she were actually looking at him: Jim Kemerlee, lean, dark, assured; tall figure at ease in a soft flannel shirt that bloused slightly above narrow hips, well-cut whipcord breeches tightening over good-looking knees before they disappeared into the tops of high leather boots. With an absurd sense of outrage she asked herself how had

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this Alaskan stolen into her thoughts? Perturbed and dignant, she thrust him from her mind and sought to back the mental picture of Alan.

But she couldn't recall her fiancé's face. Despite every effort to banish him, Jim Kemerlee persisted at the back of her thoughts, glamorous, masculine. She felt him moving beside her through the still, sultry forest with a harmony that was unfamiliar and disquieting... felt namable vital forces stirring in the secret places of her heart...

Presently came a flashing remembrance of his face as he had stood looking at her in the dusk of the wild garden at the Floating Trap. The memory of something she had divined in his shadowed eyes pierced her with an instantaneous ecstatic consciousness of him that flowed through her like an essence. It permeated every cell of her body thrilled her with a joyous, abortive emotion — something that suffused her with a wondrous, unforgettable vitality of spirit even as it drained her of physical strength.

It passed, leaving her trembling. The power of it frightened her. Made her mysterious to herself. She mastered an hysterical impulse to cry. And then, in a moment and to panic, she turned and began running back along the trail trying to escape from — she didn't know what.

After a few moments she halted abruptly and stamped her foot. 'Fool!' she addressed herself aloud with fierce contempt. 'Fool, to let the forest affect you that way!

But was it the forest? Her sea-grey eyes questioned the quiet, knowing trees; and in her was an expectancy of something that seemed already on its way to her, together with a vague sadness for an intangible innocence lost. Chaotic thoughts, half-explanations crowded into her mind, bewildering her until she flung out her arms in a baffled gesture to the verdant, fruiting wilderness which had made her play a part in such a disturbing fantasy.

she did so the first large, cool drops of rain fell on her upturned face.

A sob of relief broke from her.

Comforting, earthy, dearly familiar was the rain. Her taut nerves relaxed as the murky hush of the woods vanished in the quickening patter on the leaves. The down-pour, immediate, heavy, cascaded from the bushes in silver rills that laved her with coolness and sanity. She whipped off her *béret*, stuffed it into her jacket pocket, and began to walk slowly back toward the cannery, her outstretched arms raking the leafy green on either side of the narrow path, her face lifted to the drenching freshness.

4

She was nearing the beach when she came on Eve and Ivor sitting beneath a large cedar. It was dry under the sheltering branches. Ivor had his back against the trunk and Eve was curled up on his coat just in front of him. Again Dian reproached herself for her suspicions of her guest, for Eve was listening, eyes intent on Ivor's face, while he explained something to her.

Both glanced up as Dian paused before them.

'I'm just describing how the trees chant in a gale of wind,' Ivor greeted her. 'You remember, Sis, that fugue of mine in which I tried to express it in music. I got the idea from something John Muir wrote about making a bonfire on a hilltop among the hemlocks in a "glad, rejoicing storm." You can imagine it, can't you?' Ivor's clear eyes sought Eve's and his thin young face was alight with his desire to make her feel what he was feeling. 'The chanting of swaying branches, the red, flashing flames, the dark rainclouds flying ——'

'Yes, of course.' Eve drew a cigarette from her case and began tapping it against her thumbnail. 'Got a match?'

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With the cigarette between her painted lips she leaned over and lifted her face until her half-closed eyes were within a few inches of Ivor's. He struck a light for her and resumed his description of his storm music.

Dian lingered. She felt a special tenderness for her brother when he was expressing the high, fine thoughts that came to him, and she loved to look at the young male beauty of his face when he talked of music — his face touched with a wonder and innocence he had somehow kept in an age of sophisticated youth. She listened a few minutes and then slowly went on toward the cannery.

She had rounded but the first turn in the trail when she remembered her responsibilities as hostess and, turning, started back to tell Eve not to move until she could send an Indian boy with raincoat, umbrella, and rubbers. But when she came within sight of the tree again, the words died on her lips.

Her brother was still sitting with his back to the cedar. But Eve lay against the boy's body, one arm about his neck, the other hand on the back of his head, and with her mouth pressed to his she was very slowly moving her head from side to side.

His arms were about her but a moment when, reluctant, bewildered, he held her off from him. 'Eve... sweetheart...' his voice was hoarse, trembling. 'I can't stand that. I — I ——' Despairingly he caught her to him again, covered her face with blundering boyish kisses, and the next instant was on his feet plunging up the trail into the forest.

Dian in a flame of fury sprang forward and jerked Eve to her feet. 'How dare you try your cheap tricks on him!' She grasped the girl's shoulders and held them as in a vice. Memories of certain week-ends in the South rushed to her mind and a sudden wrathful disgust slipped the leash from her tongue. 'Tawdry tricks you have been practicing

for the last three years on every man who came your way!’

‘Why... Di—an!’ Eve’s words held a quavering surprise. She was batting her eyes like a little girl trying not to cry. One hand rubbed her throat where her frock had tightened when Dian brought her to her feet. ‘You — you nearly choked me! But, of course, honey, you didn’t mean to do it. I — I’ll forgive you...’

She was raising her face to bestow a pardoning kiss when Dian pushed her away. ‘Don’t — you — do — it!’ she said through closed teeth, her blonde head drawing back, her finely moulded upper lip lifted. ‘Don’t you touch me!’

Eve’s condoning manner slipped like a mask from her. Her white face sharpened and her eyes grew hard as tin. In a silence filled with the whisper of rain in the forest the two girls stood face to face. For one naked moment there flared between them a deadly feminine hostility, a ferocious thing equipped with claw and fang.

Then Eve got hold of herself. She spoke in a voice poisonously sweet: ‘When did you take up eavesdropping, darling?’

But Dian’s mind was not on herself. ‘You’ve got to let Ivor alone,’ she commanded, with ill-controlled fury. ‘Do you understand?’

Eve laughed contemptuously. ‘You weary me, Dian. Your precious brother doesn’t want to be let alone. You’d better learn something about men.’

Dian felt as if she were confronting a changeling. She stood regarding her guest with a new, horrifying clarity of vision. Swift impressions, disquieting conclusions, flashed through her mind: Eve detailing her innumerable amatory conquests. Eve, forever involved in some flirtation with the husband or fiancé of a friend. Predatory. Inconstant. Physically chaste. Mentally a strumpet. Playing always to rouse a man to passion, then drawing back smugly pro-

claiming her detestable virtue — and going on to the next. Now she was after Ivor —

Dian's hands, clenched at her sides, shook as she took a step forward. 'Eve' — her voice was deadly level — 'you're not going to experiment with my brother. You either leave him alone — or you get out.'

Eve looked at her, making no reply. Her blue eyes had suddenly taken on a wide blank look that made Dian feel as if she were futilely beating her hands against a locked door. Then the dark girl's face began to quiver. 'Oh, darling...' she sobbed, throwing herself against Dian and clasping her with convulsive little arms. 'You always misunderstand me... you're hard... unjust... cruel. And I can't — I can't bear the way your eyes scorn me. You... my friend I — I love best in all the world... hating me... sending me away...' Her words blurred and lost themselves in the weeping that shook her slight frame.

Dian stood a moment without moving. Something told her this was Eve's way out of a tight place. Yet, despite herself, the weak clinging arms, the very smallness of the shaking body, made a claim on her feminine chivalry. Something about the drooping tiny figure in its ridiculously inadequate silk frock and scarlet sandals, now twisted out of shape, roused Dian's pity. And all at once she discovered herself to be very tired, as if she had been fighting a long time. Though no question had been settled between her and Eve, it seemed the moment for an armed truce.

She drew herself away, not touching Eve. 'Come,' she said with a sigh of weariness, 'let's go home.' Picking up Ivor's coat she handed it, together with her own béret, to the other girl, who silently put them on.

Then Dian led the way out from the shelter of the cedar into the quiet, heavy rain.

5

When the two girls came in sight of the long white cannery buildings, they saw the canning crew in oilskins and sou'westers hurrying down to the dock. Dian followed the direction of the men's alert, turned faces. The next instant the events of the last few hours were wiped from her mind.

For up the channel through the straight-falling rain the tugs were coming in from the traps. Fish! Her heart leaped with a thrill that marked her for a canneryman's daughter. Back in the forest, when she had dwelt on the hazards dared by the home-returning salmon, hers had been an admiring commiseration for a gallant, fighting creature. Now, the sight of those approaching tenders and their great vermilion fish-scows freed in her something sharp and primitive — a pursuit-of-game ruthlessness that had meant life to her smoke-tanned, skin-clad forbears.

Put up the pack! Get the fish! The time is short! At the back of her mind these thoughts fused into an avid expectancy that set her feet running along the dripping trail to see the haul the moment the tugs docked. She remembered to tell Eve to go on to the *Star* and get into dry clothes. And as she passed the can-and-box warehouse, she darted inside, caught up a slicker for herself, and hurried out again, slipping it on as she ran.

Then the significance of the tenders' early return struck her: had the run been on at the Turlon traps they could not have come back so soon.

She found this to be the truth when she reached the wharf and looked down into the salmon-scows. Two were empty. The third had barely five hundred fish in the bottom. Gloom showed in the sagging shoulders of the crew. Some of them were already going back to their quarters. Dian caught snatches of their talk: 'Fish famine,

by God!' 'Another year like '27. Remember? Thirty canneries went broke.'

She found Sockeye standing under the cannery eaves unmindful of a stream of water that hit his yellow sou'wester and bounced up like a fountain. He was talking earnestly to young Captain Zowie of the *Thlinget Chief*.

'Great Christ!' he moaned, as Dian came up to him. 'Think of it! Not enough fish in the Turlon traps to stink a frying-pan, yet Zowie tells me they're running fair on the West Coast of the outer islands. No inside run at all. Sunny Cove skunked, by Heaven, on the first day of the season!'

'Perhaps the seiners will bring in a catch later on, Sockeye.' Dian, though as disappointed as any, was impelled by his very wretchedness to offer him comfort.

When she went aboard the *Star* to change to dry clothes, anxiety drew her time and again to the porthole that commanded a view of the floats and the dock. A few seiners did come in, but with very light hauls.

When she was nearly ready for supper, she sighted the *Who Cares* moving swiftly up the channel, low in the water and cutting a fine bow wave. The thought of Tyler Kemerlee, debonairly careless, sent her spirits upward. She would ask him to stay to supper to enliven the rainy evening.

The *Who Cares* moored just below the stern of the *Star*. Dian slipped on her own slicker and sou'wester, and ran out to the taffrail intending to call a greeting to Tyler. But he and Jim Kemerlee were already talking, Dian surmised, over the sale of Tyler's haul. The hold of the *Who Cares* was full of first-run salmon, clean and gleaming silver in the rain.

As Dian watched the brothers, something in their attitude puzzled her. They were speaking earnestly, but in tones too low for her to catch their words. And Jim, who

should have been overjoyed to get such a splendid haul for Sunny Cove, stood with his brows knotted.

Finally Tyler shrugged and laughed. 'All right, old man,' he said in a louder voice. 'You know your own business.' He turned, obviously with the intention of re-entering his pilot-house.

It was then that Dian called.

Tyler raised his eyes, swept off his dripping sou'wester, and answered her greeting. There was a new light of coolness and daring in his face, a faint, diabolic quirk to his smile.

'We want you to stay to supper, Mr. Kemerlee!' she invited eagerly.

Before Tyler could reply, Jim turned quickly to look up at Dian. He greeted her as pleasantly as had Tyler, and in addition his swift smile had a certain radiant quality he could put into it — when he chose. It was as if he tried deliberately to draw her attention from his brother. 'I've already asked Ty to stop over with us, Miss Turlon,' he said. 'But he thinks he has to get along and deliver his catch.'

'Deliver his catch!' Dian's narrow brows came together in displeased surprise. 'Tyler Kemerlee, do you mean to tell me you're not going to sell your fish to us?'

Again it was Jim who answered: 'No, worse luck.' He put his hand on his brother's broad, wet shoulder. 'He's already contracted his summer's haul to the Island Packing Company, so he can't give us anything this season.'

'Oh-h-h...' Dian's tone expressed her disappointment. The Island Packing Company, ten miles up the channel, was her father's keenest competitor for the fish of independent seiners, like Tyler. But, for some indefinable reason, Dian was not satisfied with Jim's explanation.

The three talked casually for a few minutes longer; then

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Tyler gave a signal to his engineer. After throwing the line aboard the *Who Cares*, he leaped after it.

The pulse of the engine began to beat; the craft slid away from the dock and headed up the channel. On the stern deck in the slanting rain stood Tyler, tall, slender, in black oilskins. He smiled and raised his right hand in a gesture of farewell — the hand with the little finger gone.

Dian, waving him good-bye, was arrested by his singular air of independence. It touched her into a vague, wild response which at the same time had in it the contrary quality of warning, of disquiet. She wondered about it. Almost questioningly her gaze sought Jim Kemerlee standing motionless on the dock below her. His cool, enigmatic eyes were following his brother's boat now gliding round a rain-dimmed point up the inlet. His attitude told her nothing.

But as she walked back to the shelter of her cabin, something in her own self brought the answer to her question: Tyler's independence was that of carelessness and irresponsibility.

6

Supper was not a gay meal even though Dian forced herself to meet Eve as though the scene at the cedar tree had never been.

Jim Kemerlee's face wore an expression of remoteness, and Eve's several attempts to draw him into a bantering conversation met with little success. Once he looked up and grinned at her apologetically. 'Pay no attention to me tonight, Satin-and-Silk,' he said to her. 'I'm — I'm trying to do a little mental arithmetic.'

Toward the end of the meal Dian proposed, half-heartedly, that they play bridge. Jim excused himself; he had to leave on the night tide for a pile-driven trap on the

Cape Fox shore. Ivor said he was going to play some of his own compositions for Eve on the piano in the living-room of the Superintendent's House. And so, soon after Dian finished her coffee, she left them and followed the wet trail back to the dock where the *Star* was moored.

She ascended the gangplank to the deck feeling a bit wistful and lonely. Instead of going to the ship's social hall where an Indian servant had kindled a fire for her, she made her way aft to the charthouse. Here, in the days of her grandfather's command, she and her mother had spent many happy hours with the old skipper. He had been dead a dozen years, but his wide-armed chair still stood beside the map table. Dian drew it to the open end of the charthouse and sat looking out through the damp silver dusk. Smells of dripping forest and dank salt-water piling were in the air.

Down the channel an occasional seine-boat slipped past, nets and corks in a jumbled heap at the stern, a dory perched on top, and the moving red and green lights mellowed by the falling rain. After Dian had watched them for a time she realized that these must be independent fishermen who had gone up to the Island Packing Company's cannery to sell their hauls. Now they were on their way back to the West Coast where the run was on.

Presently the *Fort Tongass*, Red Skain's boat, came into view. She leaned forward, eyeing it with a sudden, wondering resentment. Red had always sold to Sunny Cove. Why was he now taking his haul to the Island Packing Company?

A vague, premonitory feeling made her wish, all at once, that her father was not so far away. She held him in her thoughts with love and admiration until a certain sense of security came to her. No man of her acquaintance was so sure, so powerful, as Eagle Turlon. And, she told herself, none — not even Alan — had ever made her so aware of

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life's romantic and picturesque qualities as had her father. Her mind reverted to what she had heard of the days when both he and the 'fish game' were young in Alaska.

There were no fishtraps then and canneries depended wholly on the hauls of their Indian and white seiners. Her father had often told her, with his deep, easy laugh how he got his great packs in the old days. When his men were not catching enough fish in his own territory, he led them to the grounds of a competitor who had a better run, fought the incumbent seiners off with pike poles and *pilus*, and netted what he wanted on his rival's ground. Or he would bargain thus with the competing packer: 'Sell me fifty thousand sockeyes or I'll come over with my men and catch them in your territory.' He never failed to get the fish, for might made right in those times. Eagle Turlon was always 'high man.'

'Those were keen, wonderful days,' he would recall, regret for their passing softening his voice. 'A man knew he was alive then.'

It took bold, lusty men to establish an industry in a frontier country. 'Trail-blazers with a dash of pirate blood,' was Dian's inward comment. She wondered, sometimes, if she hadn't a drop or two of such blood herself. She shared her father's careless tolerance of the pirates on the Ketchikan coast, and something lawless in her made her take a vicarious pleasure in the raids on local fishtraps — when they were not Sunny Cove traps. Once in the *Golden Hind* a few years ago she'd had an hour of wild delight following a dark rakish craft with a wet gunnysack plastered over its name, until it disappeared behind a reef.... She wondered what new pirate excitement this summer's fishing would bring forth...

When her wandering thoughts came back to her immediate surroundings, she found that the rain was falling so mildly it barely dulled the surface of the channel. She

watched it idly from the door of the charthouse and after a while began to be aware of something beyond the tranquil blandness of the wet night. It crept in upon her, a spiritual perception of Alaska's vast, untrammelled sweep from the Pacific to the Arctic — the freedom, the promise that lay in the mountain ranges, the rivers, the valleys. With a gentle and beautiful magnetism the country seemed to be reaching out to catch her up and mould her to some tremendous purpose of its own.

A faint, happy sense of impending drama came to her, banishing every disturbing element of her long day. Yet underlying it she was conscious of a vague wanting, a pleasant yearning that was at first obscure. It grew in vividness until she recognized it — the need for someone to share all this with her. Alan! It was he she was longing for, of course... He would be here next week... She sighed. A sudden sense of bafflement came on her as she realized that now, tonight, he was fifteen hundred miles away...

She would have gone down to the *Gas Gulper* whence came the mourning of Sockeye's accordion, but she didn't want to see the foreman at this moment. She needed a companion young like herself, one with the same educational background, the same love of this frontier land. Someone North-born.

As if in answer to this thought, Jim Kemerlee stepped into the open doorway, his rubber boots making no sound on the deck. Since Dian's arrival at Sunny Cove she had maintained a neutral attitude toward him. Now she gave him a quick considering glance as he stood in fishermen's oilskins silhouetted against the pearl-grey dusk.

Perhaps it was because of her own loneliness and the soothing quiet of the rainy summer night that she found herself regarding him without prejudice. He looked slim, steel-strong, capable. About him was an aura of men's activities — the breath of forests and fiords and wild sea-

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winds. And behind his athletic strength she sensed his sure, directing brain, the keen edge of his mind. All this flashed into her consciousness, flickered an instant during which she almost captured a feeling complete and glorious; then it was gone. She heard him saying: 'We're going to shove off in a few minutes, Miss Turlon. I saw you sitting up here alone and dropped in to say good-night.'

She knew then that she had been waiting for him here in the charthouse and that she had known he would come. When she moved her chair back to permit his entrance, he stepped in with a rustle and scraping of rubber clothing. She felt his deep eyes upon her as he leaned back against the edge of the chart table and looked down. His presence, mysterious and masculine, quickened the beating of her heart and brought a fleeting memory of her unaccountable emotion in the forest that afternoon. Yet she talked calmly of commonplace things: the salmon run, which he said would probably be late on the inside channels this year. Of the weather. Of Ivor's music.

They could hear Ivor playing to Eve up at the Superintendent's House. 'Evening Star,' from 'Tannhäuser.' The music sounded dim and sweet and a little sad through the rain. Then he said: 'You mustn't worry about your brother, Dian. I'll take care of Ivor.'

She wondered how he knew she was troubled about Ivor and Eve. She could not see his face distinctly in the twilight of the charthouse, but there was a cadence in his voice that she had never heard there before. Something that wrapped her about with protection. Something she had noted in her father's voice occasionally when he talked with her mother.

After Kemerlee had gone, Dian lived over again the details of his short visit. There was nothing on the surface to account for its effect on her, yet somehow his quiet friendliness had disarmed her. She sat, strangely happy,

content, heart-warmed... He would take care of Ivor... He had called her Dian... Suddenly it seemed as if she had known him a long, long time.

She heard the three whistles that heralded the departure of the *Thlinget Chief*, but she did not rise to watch the tug pull out. In spirit she was standing in the darkened pilot-house beside Jim Kemerlee speeding out past the rain-dimmed islands to the Cape Fox trap where the North Pacific broke in muffled thunder on the shore. In this moment when her guard was down against the superintendent she wished she might, in reality, go cruising with him through the night.... In some mysterious way he had put a glamour on the world for her. He was one of those who seem to epitomize man's proud and splendid way of adventuring; the romance of man's long, successful struggle with Nature: Dominion over more powerful, though less intelligent, creatures. Shelter from the elements. Safety on the ruthless, uncertain sea.

Then, abruptly, her musings were brought to an end by the sound of approaching footsteps on the deck. 'Sparks,' the cannery radio operator, appeared in the doorway.

'Something for you, Miss Turlon,' he said. 'Relayed from Ketchikan.'

Dian was sure it was from Alan who sent her a message nearly every day. After she had opened the envelope she caught up a flashlight from the chart table and turned it on the yellow paper. The words sprang out at her:

DEAREST FEARFULLY SORRY BUT GAME WITH
VISITING POLO TEAM AT MIDWICK MAKES ALASKA
TRIP IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME STOP KNOW YOU WILL
UNDERSTAND STOP WIRE ME WHEN YOU LEAVE
KETCHIKAN NEXT WEEK STOP WILL FLY TO
SEATTLE TO MEET YOU STOP DESPERATELY
LONELY STOP ALL MY LOVE

ALAN

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Dian switched off the light and stood twisting the paper in her hands. At first but one thing struck her: Alan was not coming North. He was disappointing her for a game of polo. A silly game of knocking a ball across a green-sward. She felt a little sick and terribly lonely for a moment. Then she pulled herself together and began to justify his decision. Of course he couldn't throw his team over just to come up here for a few days. She sought to fill her mind with visions of him as she had so often seen him on the field: Alan just after a chukker smoking a quick cigarette, lithely handsome in his polo outfit, muscles rippling under tight white shirt, brown eyes glowing beneath a helmet strapped smartly under the chin. Alan astride his horse riding like a young centaur, bending, swaying, swinging his deft mallet.

She turned on the light and read the message again: 'Wire me when you leave Ketchikan next week.' Next week? Was it possible that the date of her departure for California was so near? She began counting the days in her mind. It was true. A sudden dismay banished Alan from her thoughts.

She had a flashing remembrance of that day in Berkeley less than three weeks ago when she had decided to return to Alaska. An impulse, sudden and inexplicable, had overwhelmed her one afternoon at a bridge tea; an impulse so strong it had seemed almost a summons. She could recall every detail: she was leading the ace of diamonds when out of nowhere came a vision of herself as she would be at thirty — a woman caught in the treadmill of prosaic domesticity, mistress of a home in an artificially beautiful section of Alan's city. Presiding at endless dinners. At endless bridge teas. Penned up on sunny afternoons playing cards... cigarette smoke and perfume... feminine chatter of well-groomed women, women who knew nothing of the things she loved — tides, swift cruisers, storms, and the deep Northern waters where the salmon run.

She was consistent enough to admit there were times when this Southern life appealed to her, when she enjoyed it to the full; yet just then she felt she could not stand another day of it. She must get away. A hunger for the North was in her blood. Reason had no part in her feeling. She was the creature of a blind instinct.

She had obeyed that instinct by leaving California the next day.

And here she was, she reminded herself, back in Alaska. True, so far nothing of particular import had happened to her, yet she was always aware of a sense of approach, of preparation. Every hour she felt as if she were on the brink of something wonderful, quite unprecedented. And now — Alan's message reminding her she must go South.

She found that she had already accepted his decision not to come after her, but quite without reason she was resenting his expecting her to return so soon. She tore his message into bits and walked to the open door to toss them overboard. As she did so the red light of another seiner came moving down the channel through the fine grey rain.

The rakish lines of the craft bespoke the *Who Cares* coming back from the Island Packing Company. In the darkened pilot-house, someone, Tyler beyond a doubt, was playing a banjo and the crew were singing. There was a careless gayety in their harmony that put to rout the blandness of the wet summer night:

*We're out to mine the Northern sea!
Yo ho! My bully boys, ho!
Up where the wind is wild and free!
Yo ho! My bully boys, ho!*

Tyler Kemerlee — off to seine on the rough West Coast! Jim — speeding toward the Cape Fox trap! Red Skain and every other fisherman on the coast setting forth to mine the living silver of the Northern sea!... Tomorrow,

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next day, next week, the run might turn in along the Turlon traps. When it did — heaps of 'salt-water silver' on the sorting floor! Sunny Cove leaping into glorious life! Clank of canning machinery running day and night. And everyone, from the flunkies in the China-House to the superintendent of the plant, all drunk with that pagan ecstasy, that consciousness of abundance, that fierce and reckless joy that comes when millions of salmon are pouring their clean vitality into the waters, the rivers, the veins of Alaska!

Suddenly Dian dropped the torn message where she stood and darted back into the charthouse. She found a sheet of paper and a pencil, and for a few moments wrote swiftly.

After tucking the folded paper into her pocket, she pulled her sou'wester over her hair, buckled on her yellow slicker, and ran down the gangplank. She swung along the rain-drenched walk until she reached the cannery radio cabin.

'Please, Sparks, shoot this off for me as soon as you can,' she requested when she handed the message to the operator.

After Dian had closed the door and gone, the young man read aloud from the paper she had given him:

ALL GOOD WISHES FOR VICTORY IN MIDWICK GAME
DEAR STOP DON'T EXPECT ME NEXT WEEK
STOP FISH RUN MAKES IT NECESSARY TO EXTEND
MY STAY

He held the sheet off at arm's length scrutinizing it from different angles. Then he elevated his eyebrows in a look of waggish sagacity. 'Hummmmm!' he commented. 'The fish run!'

CHAPTER FIVE

I

DURING a few days ensuing Dian saw little of Ivor, and her concern for her brother's peace of mind increased when it became evident that Eve had time for the boy only when Jim Kemerlee was absent from the cannery.

Dian had hoped her self-invited guest might not approve of the extended stay at Sunny Cove and that she might find it convenient to go back to the States by herself. But Eve Galliard had no such thought. The two girls were the only white women at the cannery and Eve was reveling in the admiration accorded her in every quarter.

The fashion of going without stockings had not yet reached Alaska, and so Eve's appearance on the dock one afternoon without hers drew a battery of astonished and interested glances from the fishermen.

Without saying anything to Dian, Eve the next day began to acquire an Alaskan sun tan. Her costume would have attracted little attention in California, but when she wore it down to the dock to see the *Thlinget Chief* come in from the traps, the crew of that tender burst into a cheer which was echoed by the men loafing on the wharf.

The costume was a complete surprise to Dian, who, in her practical outing clothes, arrived on the scene just in time to witness the demonstration. She detected a tone in the men's yells and an interchange of looks that filled her with resentment. Then she caught sight of Eve standing on the edge of the dock like some bright, pretty figure from a musical comedy.

The girl's smooth black head was bare and she wore a

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form-fitting sweater of thin vermilion silk, low-necked and without back or sleeves. A very scanty pair of white silk shorts left her lovely amber-tinted little legs bare from the thigh. On her feet were ridiculously small hair-seal moc-casins, the gift of a handsome young fisherman with whom she had been carrying on a mild flirtation. Her slender ankles were circled by copper bracelets for which Ivor had left his last cent in the paw of an ancient squaw down at the native quarters. She was nonchalant and apparently oblivious to the sensation she was creating. But her low-lidded, oblique glances missed nothing of the eager curiosity in the men's following gaze.

Dian's first impulse was to laugh at the girl. Then she remembered they were in Alaska, a man's country, where mid-Victorian ideas in the matter of covering the feminine form still prevailed. She saw the lighted black eyes of Filipinos and Indians roaming avidly over Eve's bare legs, and a sudden consciousness of race filled her with an impulse to wrap the little devil in a piece of sailcloth and have her carried from their sight.

'Eve! You simply must not wear that outfit around a cannery!' Dian exclaimed after she had maneuvered her guest back to the deck of the *Star of Alaska*. 'My land!' — she pointed to the monogram, an entwined *I T* below the belt of the shorts — 'those are Ivor's!'

'Of course,' admitted Eve complacently. 'I was going through his chiffonier — you know, Dian, I just love the look and feel of men's underwear — and took them. Aren't they darling?' She pulled the legs of the shorts out at the sides and bent over to look at them.

'But you can't dress like that here! This isn't California! The working men here ——'

'Why, hon-ney!' Eve raised guileless, cornflower eyes. 'I can't neglect my sun tan! Imagine appearing on the Channel Beach when I get back with a snow-white body!'

She began pirouetting as Ivor came running up the gang-plank. 'What's wrong with my nature costume?'

'Oh, Lord!' groaned Dian, feeling as if Eve were forcing her into the rôle of an old-maid aunt. 'Well, you see there isn't enough of it.' She paused a moment wondering how she was going to explain that in Alaska, absurd and naïve as it might seem to one from the States, this was the kind of thing men paid money to see down on Ketchikan's notorious Red Line. 'Men in Alaska ——'

'Now don't try to be quaint, Dian. Remember, I've seen you in Montecito running about all day long in a swim suit.' She thrust out her foot and with a laugh kicked off her moccasin at the approaching Ivor.

He leaped and neatly caught it.

'Well done!' Eve stood on one foot while he drew the moccasin on the other. 'Thanks, darling. Now let's go off and leave Dian to herself.' As Ivor rose from his knees she slipped one hand into his and reaching up with the other brought his blond head down close to her own. In a loud stage whisper she said: 'Dian's — got — a — naughty — mind!'

'Darn her!' thought the sorely tried girl. 'I hope the mosquitoes bite her all over.'

But this year, apparently, there were no mosquitoes and a succession of warm, sunny days made it possible for Eve to wear her nature costume in comfort everywhere. When all the men about the cannery were busy, she insisted on going with Dian up the beach to pick blueberries for one of the cooks who was making Sockeye's annual barrel of wine. But the rocks hurt her moccasined feet and so she pressed Ivor into service to carry her over the rough places and to sit with her under a tree while Dian gathered the wild fruit.

At other times Dian took the two cruising in the *Golden Hind* to visit deserted Indian villages crumbling to ruin

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behind rows of mossgrown totems. She hoped Ivor might take some interest in running the cruiser because she was giving it to him at the end of the summer, together with a new engine capable of twice the speed; the engine was already in the machine-shop waiting to be installed. But Ivor had little interest in the *Golden Hind*; Eve none at all; and the two of them shared an apathy toward Indian ruins.

Ivor, however, used dozens of rolls of film taking snapshots of Eve posing with languid arms twined about gargoyle faces on the carved poles. The posing was accomplished only after much assistance from Ivor, and Dian, forced to wait hour after hour for the pair, grew desperate with boredom.

During these days a growing anxiety about Sunny Cove was stealing into Dian's mind. Ten days of the fishing season had already passed. It was the middle of July, the time of the month when the run should have been at its height. Yet here in the Ketchikan district it had barely begun. There was no inside run at all along the shores where the Turlon traps waited. The hauls of the Sunny Cove seiners who operated wherever fish were reported were so light that the cannery was able to put up but a thousand cases a day. The daily average should have been twenty-four hundred cases. Sunny Cove must have trap fish, or it would fail to make its pack.

In the barren vicinity competition between companies for the hauls of independent seiners was of the keenest. Prices soared. Jim Kemerlee was off scouting everywhere for salmon. At Sunny Cove the canning crew alternately hung on the edge of hope or slid into the depths of despair. Quarrels among the Orientals were frequent. Anxiety and tension increased with every passing hour; for only twenty-six fishing days remained of the season.

Depression pervaded the entire district. When Dian

ran the *Golden Hind* in to Ketchikan for the mail, she found nothing but suspense and gloom. The town merchants, the banker, the hotel-keepers, all stood on street corners, preoccupied, nervous. Local cannerymen paced their docks muttering and whittling sticks. Fear of a fish famine, which meant ruin for many and hard times for every town on the coast, hung like a cloud over all.

The monetary aspect of the situation, however, was not what troubled Dian. To Eagle Turlon's daughter, packing salmon was a form of sport, a game into which she had always entered with the zest of a born gambler. Sunny Cove held a record. She, like her father, was proud of that. Sunny Cove must maintain that record, especially now when Turlon was away and Jim Kemerlee had charge of the plant.

Though she kept trying to put Jim out of her mind, he and the pack were inseparably linked in her thoughts as she crossed each unsuccessful fishing day off her calendar. Every mark brought a deeper sense of despondency — and an increasing determination that, somehow, Jim Kemerlee must get the pack.

2

One sunny afternoon when the plant lay idle half a dozen members of the white canning crew sat loafing on the edge of the dock. They were reviewing other years when failure had threatened.

'Oh, things ain't so rotten,' a grizzled fireman tried to reassure himself and his mates. 'I recollect in nineteen-twenty when I was with Turlon at Hidden Inlet, we didn't get enough fish to smell up the gear till the first of August. After that we put up a record pack, and ——'

'Yeah,' interrupted Sockeye, pausing in his pacing to look down from under the belligerent slant of his little hat.

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'But that was before the Government started wet-nursing the packing business. No limit on the fishing then; a man could fish any time, anywhere. But now we're shackled by one damned law after another and...' He finished with a gloomy shake of his head and, clamping his hands behind his back, resumed his pacing.

The others plunged into their favorite pastime of cursing the restrictions enforced by the Bureau of Fisheries in its efforts to perpetuate the salmon run. Special curses were invented for the Fish Commissioner, one Charles O'Leary. 'Czar' O'Leary, they dubbed him, bitterly, and amused themselves by inventing unique and for the most part unprintable ways of doing away with him.

'Py yumping yee whiz!' came the ponderous tones of Olaf, beach foreman, sitting on a pile angling for dog-fish. 'I lak run das O'Leary troo Iron Chink and can him!'

'Ain't you the logical gents, now!' scoffed Sockeye, falling into the vernacular as he stopped again to stir up an argument. 'I hate the North-of-Ireland pup myself, but I got brains enough to know he can't put fish in the water. A fish has his own ideas about where he wants to swim, and God alone knows where that is. Holy Mackinaw!' he moaned. 'To think anyone in his right mind would stick in this business when there's sure things like bootlegging and brace poker a man might get into! — I tell you, boys, we're in the lousiest, most uncertain game —'

'But gold-mining's more uncertain, Sockeye,' began a Stanford student, who was earning vacation money making boxes at Sunny Cove. 'I heard —'

'Listen, son!' Sockeye transfixed the youth with a pistol-like pointing of his middle finger. 'Compared with fishing, gold-mining's a cinch. All you got to do in mining is look for gold where gold ought to be. If it ain't there, it never will be there. But if it *is* there, your troubles are

over. It ain't got fins. It can't swim away from you. You hire an engineer and he can pretty well tell how much gold you're going to get and the cheapest way to get it out. Another thing, the Fish Commissioner ain't telling you how much you can take, and where you can take it from ——'

'Yes, but gold ——'

'Gold is where you find it, son,' pursued Sockeye. 'But salmon!' He flung up both hands with an emphasis that sent him skidding on a defunct dogfish. 'God-a-mighty!' he bellowed, recovering his balance. 'Salmon fool you all the time! You don't know when they'll begin to come in, or what minute they'll quit coming after they're in. Your traps catch millions one year and if the price stays up you make some money. The next year your traps catch nothing. You lose all you've made and every cent you can borrow.'

'Yes, but ——'

'Luck rules the fish game, son, and' — he added bitterly — 'so far this year Sunny Cove's had about as much luck as a skunk at a christening. Furthermore, even if our traps were filled with salmon right now, that wouldn't mean we'd get our pack. Tomorrow the run might turn from us and not another fin show all summer. Again, the run might hold off till the middle of August and begin just as the bloody Fish Commissioner makes us close down the works. Then we'd see millions of salmon going by giving us the merry ha ha, while ——'

'Help!' 'Muzzle him!' Derisive yelps and hoots rent the air. 'Py yingo, Sockeye, you're so clear like mud!'

The unabashed Sockeye flung them a look of contempt. 'Pygmy intelligences!' he articulated. 'That's the thanks I get for trying to steer you young salmon spankers away from a life of misery. Take it from me, when this season's over I'm quitting. Next summer you can look for Sockeye

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Jones down in the exact middle of the Mojave Desert where ———

'Hey!' the Stanford student pointed to the channel. '*Fort Tongass* coming in towing a skiff!'

Sockeye whirled to look. A grin broke his face. 'Fish!' his voice cracked joyously. He whacked his little hat to an angle and did a fancy step. 'Loaded to the guards, boys! Scuppers damn near awash!' He leaped to head the rush toward the salmon elevator at the end of the dock where all independent seiners came to sell their hauls.

The thin cluster of men crowding to the edge of the wharf watched impatiently while the *Fort Tongass's* helmsman brought the craft slowly in to the mooring. In the open doorway of the wheelhouse Red Skain stood on wide-spread, gum-booted legs, rolling a cigarette with one hand. His close-cropped red head was bare. Three days' stubble roughened his jaw where a lump betrayed the presence of a tobacco cud. His soiled khaki shirt, guiltless of buttons and without sleeves, hung open exposing a mat of red hair on his chest and muscular, hairy arms. As the seine boat neared the dock, he lumbered out on deck and the sun shafted through the door on a rack of rifles hanging below the roll of maps on the wheelhouse wall.

'Purty good load!' shouted Olaf, his blue eyes caressing the shimmering masses that filled the skiff and the hold of the seiner — the first haul to come in to Sunny Cove that day.

Red grinned and with an air of importance expelled smoke from his nostrils. 'Not bad! Not bad at all,' he called. 'There's always fish if you know where to look for 'em. I reckon you guys here are willing to pay a living price, too. Where's the boss?'

'Coming!' The Stanford student jerked his head toward the distant Superintendent's House from which Jim Kemerlee was just emerging.

Olaf, Sockeye, and the fireman, the oldest employees at Sunny Cove, exchanged glances. Simultaneously they moved to one side and put their heads together.

'*Djävlar!* Vill Yim Kemerlee take 'em?'

'He will if he knows what's good for him,' declared the fireman in quick, guarded tones. 'Jim's running the biggest plant on the coast and every packer's got an eye on him.'

Sockeye's face was sober again. 'No fooling!' he admitted, swinging his head from side to side. 'Holy Sailor, to think I palavered the boy into taking over a Turlon plant in a bum season! We're fourteen thousand cases behind already. Boys, Jim's just got to take every fish that's offered. This ain't no time to be looking a salmon in the gills.'

'Ya,' agreed Olaf mournfully. 'If Yim don't get his pack, Eagle'll get him. Eagle yust so soon run him off da coast, lak he done Noel Thomas.'

'Say, Sockeye, you'd better explain to Jim. He's pretty young.' The fireman spoke hurriedly because Red Skain on the *Fort Tongass* was already dropping a fender over the side. 'Tell him about that trial last summer — jury in Ketchikan deciding a fish belongs to anyone as long as it's swimming. Tell him they's plenty of time to get pernickity when the run's good, but now —'

'Things are so damned desperate it ain't in nature for a fishman to pass up this haul,' interrupted Sockeye. 'He — but pipe down. Red's stepping up on the dock now. Maybe Jim would feel more — well, free to negotiate if we'd all clear out of here. Let's —'

Sockeye, glancing up just as Jim Kemerlee came across the wharf, stopped speaking. His eyes became fixed on something beyond the young superintendent. His companions followed his gaze to the end of the long dock where the *Star of Alaska's* rigging etched the sky. The three men groaned in unison.

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Running down the gangplank from the ship came Dian Turlon. Her glinting hair blew back from her face. A knitted sport suit of pale-gold clung to her slender figure. She had an eager look of flight into the wind and sun; a clean, proud look like the golden Flying Lady figurehead on the bowsprit of the *Star*. But at the sight of her Sockeye jammed his hat down over his eyes.

'Hell!' he exclaimed under his breath. 'Stand by, boys. Here comes trouble.'

3

Dian quickly crossed the wharf and made her way among the men grouped before the *Fort Tongass*. She missed the frantic gestures Sockeye was making to attract her attention because she was looking down into the hold estimating, as her father would have done, the number of fish in Red Skain's splendid haul.

The big fisherman and Jim Kemerlee were talking, their backs to the others. As Dian approached them she heard Jim say: 'You can't sell me any of those salmon, Red. You ought to know better by now.'

The girl could scarcely credit her ears. Impulsively she started forward. 'Oh! You don't mean that! Of course we want his haul!'

'Now, you're talking, Miss Dian!' put in Red, his glance shifting between the girl and the superintendent. 'Your dad would-a done better by the plant if he'd left you in charge instead of ——' He ended his sentence with a discreet cough.

An electric silence held the spectators. A woman interfering in the fish business! A packer's daughter stepping up before the crew and countermanding the orders of a superintendent! The men waited for the outcome, their eyes focused on the slim, silken girl and the dark young man now facing each other.

In Kemerlee's face the tan slowly deepened. There was the slightest movement of his arrogant nostrils as he quietly requested: 'Miss Turlon, won't you please go back to the *Star*?'

Dian, flushing with anger, drew herself up. 'You're not taking Red's haul?' she demanded, her brows coming together.

'No.'

'Why not?' She was oblivious now of the circle of masculine faces, all of them, with the exception of Sockeye's, avid for the scene that seemed imminent.

'This isn't the place to discuss the question. But my reasons, I assure you, are sound.' He turned to the fisherman. 'Red!' — authority rang in his voice — 'Shove off!'

Every nerve in Dian's body was quivering with a fury that impelled her to loose her indignation on this lean-faced autocrat who opposed her, humiliated her before her father's men. She clenched her hands and the fine line of her jaw went white with the effort she made to control her voice. 'You ——' she began. Then stopped. No one was paying the slightest attention to her. During her blind moment of rage, Jim Kemerlee and Red Skain had again become the center of interest.

The owner of the *Fort Tongass* was speaking, a sneer in his voice: 'You ought to be running an ice-cream parlor, Kemerlee. All Alaska needs is a few more guys like you and Czar O'Leary, and we might as well give the goddam place back to the Indians. I ——'

'Get aboard, Red!' There was a sinister gentleness in the superintendent's speech. Casually he placed a hand under the burly seiner's elbow and began propelling him toward his boat. Red Skain's opaque eyes took on a baleful light. He twitched his arm and made inarticulate noises in his throat. But he went forward.

He dropped to the deck of his craft, gave an order to his

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engineer and another to a deckhand who loosed the line. There were staccato reports of a starting engine, and the *Fort Tongass* began to move out. Not till then did Red try to engage Dian's attention.

'Keep an eye on that bird!' he called above the noise of the exhaust. A jabbing motion of his thick thumb indicated Kemerlee, who, with every appearance of unconcern, was watching the departure. 'Everyone knows he's got no use for your dad. Yet soon as Eagle's back is turned he grabs off this job at Sunny Cove. And he's doing his best to run it in the hole.'

The boat was gathering speed. Red cupped his mouth with his pulpy hands and yelled across the widening water: 'It's no wonder his own dad cashed in! Raising a pup like him in a fish country is enough to croak any man. But at that, all his family isn't as lily-fingered as him. There's ——' The remainder of the sentence was lost in the throb of the engine.

Dian did not hear the last taunts. She had already turned her back on the scene and was walking swiftly up the dock.

Sockeye, his bushy brows tortured into points under the upturned brim of his little hat, stood for a moment watching her going; then he detached himself from his fellows and set out cautiously in her wake. He was careful not to overtake her until the bulk of the can-warehouse screened them both from the observation of those still on the wharf.

'Say, Dian ——' he began tentatively.

The girl whirled upon him with an intensity that staggered him. 'You're to blame for this!' Her words poured like a torrent over him. 'You're responsible for this man. Now, he's ruining Sunny Cove. Even the fishermen know it. And you stand by and let him do it. Fire him! Kick him off the dock. Do anything to get rid of him ——'

‘But, Dian ——’

‘Don’t tell me you’re afraid of him — like that big coward, Red Skain. Why didn’t Red punch him — beat him — do something to him? Red’s bigger, stronger ——’

‘Aw, listen, little girl ——’ Sockeye held out beseeching hands. ‘I can’t fire Jim. He’s hired for the summer. And, my God, Dian! Surely a girl like you doesn’t want to see men fighting! Besides, Red’s a fine, swinging liar; and you notice he waited till he was safely out in the channel before he began shooting off his mouth. He knows! Monkeying with Jimmy’s like sitting on top of a volcano. Honest, Dian! The boy’s abrupt, like dynamite. He can lick his weight in ——’

‘Stop it! How dare you stand there boasting to me about that — that scoundrel! I—I ——’ Dian’s voice broke. She bit her lips to still their trembling. ‘I hate him!’ she declared passionately. And brushing Sockeye aside she flashed down the trail to the beach.

4

The tide was high, but Dian walked heedlessly along the edge of the drift, trampling kelp and twigs and jagged stones that tore at her frail sandals. For the time being both reason and physical sensation were lost in a chaos of emotions. She moved in a frenzy of resentment and frustration that was lashed by bitter self-contempt.

To think she had held romantically in her thoughts this man who not only acted against the interests of her father, but who deliberately caused her to lose face in the presence of her father’s employees! She writhed under the sting of it. She hungered to retaliate, to hurt him for what he had done to her. She longed for power to dismiss him for what she was beginning to think he was trying to do to Sunny Cove. She must find a way to crush him, a way to show

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him that even though her father was on the other side of the world there was still a Turlon to be reckoned with.

But she tramped the rough beach in vain trying to plan some course of action against him. She was incapable of clear thinking.

At the end of two miles she began to be aware of certain physical discomforts due to her exertions. Her short, fair hair, loosed from the knot on her neck, hung in thick disorder about her flushed face. Her sandals were filled with gravel. The stockings on her slim legs were snagged into innumerable runs. The all-pervading weariness that always assailed her after an emotional upheaval was slowing her headlong gait. She looked for a place to rest.

She found a huge, wave-whitened log that some winter storm had washed up under a hemlock tree, and dropped to the sand, her back against the drift. After a while the lassitude of exhaustion joined with the peace of the waning afternoon to still the tumult in her mind. She felt a little wind, fresh with salt and seaweed, stirring her hair. Her eyes rested on the channel, calm and edged with the reflection of spruce-bordered shores. An airy line of sand-pipers zigzagged along the water; and there was the soothing, far-faint put-put-put of salmon-trollers making for the open sea beyond the islands.

On the beach down by the wooded point that hid Sunny Cove from her, two figures came strolling. Despite the distance Dian could see that their arms were about each other. A Filipino cannery hand and his Indian sweetheart. The forest trails about the plant were alive with them now. Happy, careless, lovers for a season. Then separation and forgetfulness. For an instant she envied them their freedom from responsibilities, restraint. To live like these Indians, like these Filipinos, untroubled by the complications of civilization, education, conventions. Like Primo and Augustine, now courting, in apparent amity,

the same slim brown girl. Dian dwelt listlessly on this odd Northern triangle until around the point a Thlinget canoe glided into view.

The slender craft, swift, high-prowed, claimed her attention. A single figure knelt in the stern swinging a paddle. In the effortless ease of the performance there was a lovely, lulling rhythm... She closed her eyes for a moment...

The nearing sound of paddling roused her and she glanced up to find the canoe skimming in toward the spot where she sat. Though the craft had a Thlinget eye painted on each side of the bow, it was no Indian who knelt in it and with a final thrust sent the prow grating into the beach a few yards below her.

It was Jim Kemerlee.

At the sight of him a sense of outrage took possession of Dian. The unparalleled assurance of the man — to follow her! Instinctively her muscles tensed for flight; but her mind sternly bade her body stay where it was. Under lowered lids she watched his approach, and in a moment was despising herself for the effect he had on her.

Despite her anger, she was conscious of a certain thoroughbred look that was his as he came up, bareheaded, from the beached canoe. It satisfied something deep inside her that he was leanly resilient like an Indian runner; yet the immaculate ivory flannel shirt and the knee-laced breeches he wore were of the finest materials of their kind obtainable in civilization, and obviously well-tailored. The sun was on his black hair, the golden-brown of his face and throat, his eyes, blue, cool, and deliberate under black brows. His dark coloring had always stirred her, and now when he gave her the sudden smile that illumined his face, an uncontrollable tremor ran through Dian. What could be the matter with her! Fiercely she reminded herself that this man, this Kemerlee, had deliberately humiliated her.

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That he was her father's hireling — and false to his trust. That she hated him with all her heart.

'I was afraid I'd missed you,' he said casually, pleasantly.

His assumption that all was harmonious between them was the last straw! She remained silent, indignation accumulating dangerously in her ready to leap out at the least excuse.

He settled his long figure easily on the sand near by, one leg bent under, the other knee raised, and drawing a pig-skin case from his shirt-pocket, offered her a cigarette. When she refused frostily, he lighted one for himself.

He smoked a few moments in evident enjoyment, then lowered his arm to slanting repose across his upraised knee, the cigarette pendent between slim fingers. Quietly, contemplatively, he looked across at Dian. For a second it seemed to her there was an odd, sympathetic expression in his eyes, but immediately she decided it must have been because she saw his face through a waft of smoke. He began:

'I'll explain, now, about Red's —'

'Explain to my father when he comes. I shall accept no apology for your conduct.'

He regarded her with a curious look of surprise. 'I'm making no apologies, Dian. Here's the situation: I couldn't call your attention to this before the men, though they all know it, of course. But — perhaps you noticed that Red, despite the fact that he's supposed to be a seiner, hadn't a salmon in his lot with a net mark on it. And —'

'What are you trying to tell me?' Dian interrupted with a scornful little laugh. 'Do you think I've lived around my father's canneries all my life without learning to tell the difference between trap fish and seine fish?'

'You knew then they were pirated fish?'

Dian shrugged. Absurd of him, she thought, to believe her ignorant of Red Skain's status.

She answered him: 'Whether or not they were pirated fish is no concern of ours. Red Skain is a fisherman. His haul is for sale. We need every fish we can get. Now ——' She sat upright, suddenly alive to nothing but the issue that affected her father. 'What do you mean by turning that haul away to our competitors?' Her eyes held a cold, grey look of suspicion.

'Apart from the ethics of the thing, all the cannerymen in this district have signed an agreement to refuse pirated fish. I've signed it. It's the only remedy we have for piracy and ——'

'Your excuse is ridiculous. You and I have grown up in the traditions of the packing business which was established by your father and mine. Ethics! Why, a canneryman's agreement has always been tempered by conditions. Right now we've got to have fish. We've been buying Red's hauls for years. There's no reason why we should refuse them now. As for pirates — Eagle Turlon is big enough to ignore pirates. He's powerful enough to fight for what he wants and to protect his own! If you're afraid of pirates' — she crisped her words with scorn — 'you're not a big enough man to play the fish game.'

She waited a moment for him to say something. But he only shoved his cigarette to extinction in the sand.

'Now I know why the Island Packing Company has nearly twice as many cases as we have!' she flung at him accusingly. 'They've got a superintendent who knows how to run a cannery. But you! You've been turning down hauls ever since the season opened. Even your own brother's. I don't believe Tyler ever had a contract with the Island people at all.'

Jim Kemerlee studied her under meditative brows. The fact that he remained silent and yet seemed to be com-

pletely master of the situation drove her to reckless statements. 'You're deliberately turning salmon away knowing that my father's losing thousands of dollars every day. Worse, he's losing his prestige as a packer.' A maddening sense of her own helplessness brought Dian to her feet. Kemerlee rose with her. They stood facing each other.

'But that's what you're after, isn't it?' she taunted. 'You've always been jealous because Dad succeeded with Sunny Cove after your own father failed. That's why you took this job as superintendent in his absence. You're determined to ruin the pack this year and make him lose his splendid record.'

She could hear his wrist watch ticking off the seconds. At last he asked quietly: 'Do you really believe I took over Sunny Cove for that?'

'I'm sure of it!' she came back, with slow, deep emphasis.

When he spoke again there was the same sinister gentleness in his voice she had noted when he ordered Red Skain off the dock. 'Then you'd prefer that Sunny Cove continued serving as a fence for stolen goods?'

It took Dian a moment to grasp the significance, the enormity of this statement. 'Oh!' she gasped. 'You're calling my father a thief! You — you ——' Indignation choked her. She swept her hair back from her flashing eyes and taking a step toward him continued in a voice tense with suppressed fury: 'Oh! if I only had the power to discharge you — fire you, as you were no doubt fired from your last place at the end of the season. I suppose then, as now, you proved false to your ——'

'You don't know what you're talking about!'

Both his hands shot out as if he were about to lay hold of her shoulders. Then he jerked them back, clenched obviously with the effort he made to keep from touching her. He was gazing into her face with a lean, cold look

that was like a rapier. Their glances met and locked and in the silence that fell between them Dian was shattered by a curious emotion. It was as if something winged and wild and furious in her both hated him and was irresistibly drawn to him. She longed to beat him cruelly with the powerful pinions of her enmity, and at the same time she yearned for the touch of his restrained brown hands.

She came to herself, trembling, and had to grope in her mind for the reason for this quarrel. Then, lest he see how much he had affected her, she said imperiously: 'Don't say another word to me. I'm going.'

He stepped aside almost as if he wanted to get away from her. Hours afterward it came to Dian that he, too, had been trembling. But now she walked swiftly, purblindly down to the beached canoe, shoved it off, and stepped in.

She knelt in the bottom and began paddling with clean, strong strokes toward Sunny Cove. Her hair blew back from her set face, cooling her brow. She was glad to plunge the paddle in and use the full strength of her arms against the resistance of the water. The prow of the canoe carved a V-ripple on the smooth channel. She scattered a flock of salt-water ducks into flight. It wasn't until she rounded the point and saw the great white buildings of Sunny Cove looming against the forest that she realized she had appropriated Jim Kemerlee's canoe.

She was glad of it. It gave her a keen sense of satisfaction to picture him plodding through the kelp and drift along the shore. That was the place for him — on the beach. And if she had anything to do with it that's where he'd soon be in every sense of the word. She'd show him that she was not resourceless.

Tonight, she decided, she would send a radiogram to her father in Siberia telling him of the situation at the cannery and advising him to discharge Kemerlee by wireless. And,

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she vowed further, before she left for the South she'd see that Sunny Cove bought at least one pirate haul of salmon from Red Skain.

5

As Dian paddled her canoe in toward the dock where a cluster of seine-boats were moored, melody floated out across the afternoon calm — one of Sockeye's accordion renderings indicative of profound gloom. But in this instance there was the addition of several admirably chorded voices singing to his accompaniment. The words were burdened with richly burlesqued sorrow:

*'Tis saaad — when you think — of her waaas-ted life,
For youuuuuth — cannot mate — with aaaage...*

Dian saw that the *Who Cares* had come in during her absence and was lying alongside the *Gas Gulper*. In the bow of the big seiner, sitting back to back on the same coil of rope, were Ivor, Eve in her nature costume, and Tyler Kemerlee, all with their chins raised in the manner of malamutes howling at the moon. Catching sight of Dian approaching, they were inspired to further depths of pathos:

*And her beauuuu-tee was soooold — for an oooold man's goooold,
She's a buuuurd — in a gillll-ded — caaaage!*

Eve and Ivor continued to sing while Tyler, with a welcoming smile, stood up and beckoned her with one hand, using the other meanwhile to make jabbing motions toward the cabin of the *Gas Gulper* whence came the melancholy outpourings of the invisible Sockeye.

When Dian swung in alongside the *Who Cares*, the singers all rushed to the gunwale and Tyler helped her to the deck.

'Hello, Tyler!' she said. 'Where have you been all these days?'

'Oh,' he replied easily, 'I've been going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it.'

Eve cut in quickly: 'Mercy, Dian! Where have you been?' She made big eyes at Dian's dishevelment. Then without waiting for an answer she went on: 'We've been trying to tease Sockeye into coming on deck, but he won't even stick his head out of the pilot-house. He's in the dumps.'

Dian, knowing the source of the foreman's depression, felt a little contrite. But she laughingly dissembled: 'Oh, it's only his usual fish-run grouch embroidered with a few ruffles of despair! Ivor, you ask him to come for supper tonight. And I hope you'll stop over with us, Tyler?'

Tyler Kemerlee looked down at her with that glance which excluded all women but herself from his world. 'I came in this afternoon hoping you'd ask me,' he answered.

Dian was glad to see him. She hadn't dreamed that anyone could take her mind from her troubles, but now Tyler, tall, slim, in his good-looking outing clothes with that odd nugget belt buckle not quite in good taste, seemed deliberately to make her conscious of his slightly bitter, disturbing mouth smiling above his cleft chin; of his well-set head and the thick red-brown hair brushed back from his high forehead where it grew in a point. A new force emanated from him as if some indefinable thing once penned but keenly alive had now found a way to freedom.

Dian felt a responsive stirring of that recklessness he had incited in her that night they had danced and sung pirate songs together at the Floating Trap. Standing there in her sea-wet clothes with her tawny mane blowing free, she smiled up at him. And responsibility, seriousness, slipped from her. There was that in Tyler which made her feel lawless, untamed, like the wind, like swift-footed animals. For no reason she could name there flashed into her mind a winter night of her childhood when she and an In-

dian playmate had stood on the moonlit snow watching two wolves racing side by side across a sweep of frost-white tundra.

But while these thoughts were coursing through her mind, she was chatting with Tyler about conventional things and laughing at Ivor's witticisms.

A little later, when she and Eve were on their way to their quarters aboard the *Star* where they were to dress for supper, Dian came to a pause in front of the little radio cabin.

'Eve,' she said after a moment's thought, 'you run along and take your shower. I'm going in here to file a radiogram to Dad. It must go tonight without fail.'

CHAPTER SIX

I

WHEN Dian filed the message that would, she believed, bring an end to Jim Kemerlee's management of Sunny Cove, she told herself she was looking forward to an evening undisturbed by that young man's presence. After their stormy encounter up the beach that afternoon, he wouldn't have the audacity to face her so soon, she reasoned. He'd find business that would keep him away from supper at the Superintendent's House.

But such was not the case. Just as the party was assembling in the living-room he came downstairs from his own quarters, nonchalant, quietly cheerful, and looking particularly well-groomed and urban in smart summer flannels. Dian felt a queer resentment against him for his dark comeliness. She decided to ignore him.

Eve, full of wiles, gave a glad cry of welcome that ended in a proprietary little rush. 'I'm going to sit next to Jim-my!' she caroled, tucking an arm through his.

'You'll do nothing of the sort,' objected Ivor, grasping her other hand. 'You're going to sit next to me.'

'Oh, I say, Ivor!' Jim laughed. 'Let's compromise and put the lady between us.'

They agreed on that and all went out together to the table.

Dian had given an air of festivity to the supper by having it served on the veranda overlooking the water. From sapling hemlocks that screened the cannery buildings from view, the liquid golden notes of hermit thrushes heralded the approach of evening. The inlet, quiet as a mountain lake, swung away between purpling islands, its smooth

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windings tinged with the clear rose and pale-green of a long, cloudless sunset.

To supplement the excellent menu prepared by Axel, the veteran cook, Sockeye Jones had contributed two bottles of his oldest blueberry wine, one drink of which, he declared earnestly, would imbue a Kodiak grizzly with all the tenderness of a cooing dove. Music came over the radio from the Palm Court of the Palace Hotel in San Francisco; sophisticated music, exquisitely rendered and muted to a tonal background which, in some incongruous way, added a poignant beauty to the wilderness stretching away on all sides.

When the meal was half over, the remote orchestra swung into selections from 'The Pirates of Penzance.' Ivor's face took on a listening look; his strong, slender fingers began tapping out the familiar rhythm on the table. Presently he announced: 'You know, people, I have an idea. I'm going to compose something reckless and lively in that strain and call it "The Pirates of Ketchikan."'

Sockeye checked a forkful of salad halfway to his open mouth and impaled Ivor with a glance of mingled scorn and reproach. 'Listen to that big, husky son of a salmon packer!' he derided. 'Dallying with sharps and flats while the rest of us grow grey worrying over the fish run!'

Tyler Kemerlee spoke with lazy irony: 'Well, Jim also once said he saw a musical-comedy situation in our pirate industry. And you'll admit, Sockeye, that Ivor'd have no trouble picking up a dash of real color over on the West Coast.'

Sockeye turned odd, questioning eyes on Tyler and slowly put down his fork. Then, with a well-I'll-be-damned shake of his head, he resumed his supper in silence. But Ivor exclaimed: 'You said something, Ty! I was talking to one of the boys off the *Puffin*, the Pirate

Patrol cruiser that was in here yesterday. He says there's a new pirate in the running this year — an elusive devil, swifter than chain lightning. They haven't been able to get a line on him, so they've named him "The Lynx."

Dian asked, 'I wonder why they call him that?'

'They say he camouflages his boat in various ways with that washable paint — smoke-grey, ivory, black,' responded Tyler. 'And when he gives her the gun and goes streaking along the channels, especially in the early morning, it's some job to tell his craft from those low patches of fog that cling to the water. He's got an underwater muffler, too, so he can throw her wide open and slip along making no more noise than a — well, say a lynx!' Tyler laughed. 'And others maintain he's got his mast fixed so he can unstep it and quite change the appearance of his boat that way.'

'Clever!' Dian edged the word with a significance that was meant as a challenge to Jim Kemerlee who, she observed with scorn, seemed to be absorbed in the eating of his salad.

'The kid from the Patrol told me they thought they sure had the Lynx cornered the other day after he'd raided the Stonehead trap, but he got away,' said Ivor. 'Know anything about that, Ty?'

'Only the trapmen's side of the story,' replied Tyler easily. 'When I dropped in at Stonehead this morning I had to listen to the watchmen's tale of woe.' He chuckled reminiscently. 'Never in my life did I meet a madder pair of Swedes making war talk!'

'Tell us about it, Tyler.' Eve bent her wide blue gaze upon him. 'We could do with a bit of excitement around here, vicarious or otherwise.'

Tyler complied, with his air of secret amusement: 'Well, Eve, for the benefit of a little cheechako like you, I'll explain that fishtraps, as a rule, are always placed in wild,

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lonely places far from canneries and other habitations; some in hidden inlets, some on the open coast. Stonehead seemed to have been made to order for the Lynx. It's a standing trap, you know, perhaps three hundred feet off-shore — a fish-pound made by driven piles hung with webbing, and covering an area — oh, bigger than a church. Men who watch standing traps don't live right on them as do the watchmen on the floating type. The Stonehead guards had their shack on the beach near the end of a wooded point. Back of them was thick timber, but in front they had a fine view of the trap.

'They were in the habit of going indoors together for their meals, leaving their rifles outside hanging on a deer head at the corner of the cabin. A careless stunt, as I told them only last week when I was in there. On the day of the robbery they went inside for lunch, and closed the door because of a stiff onshore breeze. Another careless thing, since the wind made a noise in the trees and rattled the stovepipe so they couldn't hear anyone approaching, either by land or water.'

'But who'd dream of pirates making a raid in broad daylight!' exclaimed Eve.

'It looks as if those watchmen might have been paid something to be a little careless,' commented Ivor.

Tyler shook his head. 'Not those fellows. They're square. Been turning down bribes for three years. At any rate, just when they were about through eating, one of them raised up and took a look at the trap through the little window above the table. He said he nearly fainted, for there alongside the spiller lay a strange craft, and three pirates were busy brailing good fish from the trap into their own hold!

'He yelled to his partner who was still eating, and rushed for the door. It was locked from the outside! He whirled about, leaped onto the table, and tried to crawl

out through the window. But the window is very small and both watchmen are very big, so between getting stuck and pulling each other free, and finally tearing the frame loose, it was some time before they squeezed out. Someone evidently familiar with the place had slipped a new padlock through the hasps on the outside of their door! At the same time they had lifted both rifles from the deer horns and walked off with them!

'The watchmen sprinted down to the beach for their skiff to row out to the trap. The boat was gone also! The poor devils could do nothing but gallop up and down the sand trying to identify the pirates through their glasses. But even there they were baffled. The craft was grey-white, they said, but its name was hidden under gunny-sacks. And the fish-robbers were perfectly disguised by their black slickers, high rubber boots, sou'westers, and black silk handkerchiefs tied across the lower parts of their faces.

'The watchmen were helpless. They jumped up and down at the edge of the tide, shaking their fists and cursing, while the gang helped themselves to fish. This seemed to amuse the pirates immensely, for one of them, probably the Lynx himself, stopped brailing long enough to throw an airy kiss to each swearing Swede.' Tyler chuckled, and the others, with the exception of Jim and Sockeye, laughed outright.

'Just about this time one of the watchmen sighted the Pirate Patrol cruiser coming down the inlet with a bone in her teeth. It was the *Puffin*, Lem Hanley's own craft. The Lynx saw it also, because he hauled in his brailer, got his men aboard, and speeded up his engine. But for some reason he waited until the *Puffin* was nearly on him before he shoved off.'

Eve, bright-eyed with interest, spoke across the table: 'Then Mr. Hanley had no trouble catching up with him!'

It was Ivor who burst out with the answer: 'Trouble! You should hear the kid from the *Puffin* tell about that chase! Boy, how the Lynx can go! And the way he handles his craft! Puts her hard over and she cuts a corner like a Ford coupé. He kidded Hanley into chasing him in among the islands; then he just played drop-the-handkerchief with the Chief of the Pirate Patrol. He'd lead off until he was going like a streak. Suddenly he'd turn on a dime, and the *Puffin*, unable to answer the helm so quickly, would shoot on by and swing in a clumsy, quarter-mile circle before she could follow.

'The maddening part of it was that the Lynx would wait until Hanley caught up with him again — and remember, he had his hold full of pirated fish! Then he'd step on the gas and dart into some small inlet. Just when Hanley thought he had him bottled, Mr. Lynx would slip through a narrow, rock-studded channel Hanley had never seen before, luring the *Puffin* to wreck herself on a sunken rock. But Hanley was too wise for that. He'd back out and circle the island, only to find the Lynx waiting for him on the other side ready for another romp. Gee! The Chief got so sore he grabbed the wheel himself. And then the chase really got good!

'Finally the Lynx headed straight for a big kelp bed. Hanley turned the wheel over to one of the crew and danced out on deck hollering: "He's ours, boys! Stand by to board him! We've got him with the goods!"

'But instead of getting stuck in the kelp bed, that slim grey cruiser slipped right through it like the grace of God through a camp meeting! Hanley couldn't understand it, unless the Lynx had revolving knives hooked up in front of his propeller and maybe one on the bow.

'Hanley took a chance and tried to force the *Puffin* on in the wake of the Lynx. But his propeller got all balled up with kelp. His engine stalled. And then, when he couldn't

budge an inch, this Lynx skipper steps out on his stern deck, waves good-bye and swings north around an island. That's the last the *Puffin* saw of him. Hanley had to lower a boat and have his men cut the *Puffin* clear before he could tow her out into open water.'

Tyler, listening with a faint, ambiguous smile, turned to Jim who had betrayed no interest in the recital. 'Rather a neat one on Lem Hanley, eh, Jim?'

The brothers exchanged glances, but Jim said nothing. Sockeye, however, could keep silent no longer. 'Holy — jumping — swordfish!' he chortled, rubbing his hands gleefully. 'That's a poke in the eye for Hanley, all right. Why, fifteen years ago when you all were kids, Hanley was a purse-seiner and the slickest pirate that ever lifted a trap. He'd come here from some bunch-grass state where he'd been herding cows and he didn't know which end of a net went up. But that never stopped him from bringing in a good haul. Got caught in a blow one night and his net went overboard. He didn't bother to get a new one, but for two years he kept right on bringing in the fish. He got so darned good at it, and your own dad, Tyler, got to losing so many fish from his traps that he figured it would be cheaper to stake Hanley to a trap of his own. And that's what John Kemerlee did.'

Sockeye laughed and swung his big head from side to side. 'Hanley's trap, like his net, never caught many fish. But still he kept on bringing them in. Then Eagle Turlon's traps began to check up short. So right away Eagle calls a meeting of all the cannerymen and trap-owners around here. They met in the poker room at Briny Dow's in Ketchikan. I remember the day well.

'Eagle proposes that they all put in together and organize a Pirate Patrol. Then the question comes up: Where could they get a capable man to be the chief of it? As usual it's Eagle who's right there with the answer. He

lost and sad about Tyler that filled her with a sudden unaccountable compassion for him. Then the look vanished from his face and she heard his careless, bantering voice saying: 'Good old Jim. He never lost an ideal in his life. Believes honesty and merit are bound to win. Knows that justice must prevail; that man is master of his fate, and all that ——' he finished with an outward sweep of his hand.

Dian felt a subtle personal application underlying the speech of both Kemerlees. 'Don't you agree with him, Ty?' she asked.

Tyler shook his head, smiling a little regretfully. 'No,' he answered. 'From the cradle to the grave it's chance that rules men's lives. If you get the breaks, you win. If you don't — you lose. And' — he shrugged his lean wide shoulders — 'win or lose, it makes little difference. The end for all of us is — a last, long leap into oblivion. Life's something like the fish run — a case of fish eat fish in the headlong rush toward death!'

'Oh, Tyler! You're terrible!' Eve shivered and snuggled closer to Jim Kemerlee. 'Don't talk about death. Talk about — well, tell us more about pirates. Why do you have them?'

'Why?' Tyler was thoughtful for a moment. 'Well, Eve, there are about as many reasons as there are pirates. Men like Red Skain are pirates because it gives them a chance to make a living without working very hard. It's lots easier to lift a trap, you know, than it is to fish with a seine. They justify themselves by blaming O'Leary, the Fish Commissioner, and the regulations made for perpetuating the run. They say O'Leary's closed off the best seining grounds, making it a felony for a fisherman to set a net in the restricted waters, but that at the same time he permits big packing companies like the Turlon outfit to put in fishtraps that catch millions. So the pirate takes

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his share of fish by lifting the traps of the favored packers, and ——'

'Favored packers, my eye!' Sockeye bellowed in protest. 'When did that flannel-mouth O'Leary ever favor a packer? He's been bucking us ever since he came North. Only last summer he closed out two of the best Turlon traps and ——'

'Oh, Sockeye!' interrupted Dian with pleading impatience. 'Please let him tell about pirates!'

Tyler grinned ironically and tried to catch his brother's eye. 'I say, Jimmy! Since the girls are so interested in local sin, why don't you take them for a run down to Pirates' Cove one day before they leave? — That, girls, is an inlet just this side of the Canadian boundary line where the rum-runners from the South meet the bootleggers from the North to bargain for cargoes. You should see it, ladies! A delightful sylvan retreat where the primeval beauty of the shore is enhanced by assorted whiskey cases, straw bottle covers, and other bibulous débris attendant on our strict observance of the Eighteenth Amendment. Here, also, fish pirates meet to talk business, telling one another just what traps each proposes to lift on the next tide, so two will not start for the same place.'

'*Noblesse oblige* among the predatory!' Dian smiled.

'Just so!' agreed Tyler with a bright look of deviltry. 'And there, by the way, Ivor, is a setting for your musical comedy — background of snow-capped peaks stained with sunset, green wooded shores, and the black-flag fleet anchored in the saffron afterglow with the fellows singing to each other across the quiet water, waiting on the tide to go out to their plundering.'

This idea captured the imagination of Ivor and Eve. They began making laughing suggestions for a plot. Dian wondered what there was about Tyler Kemerlee that always made lawlessness seem so natural, so delightfully

attractive. Just listening to his nonsense now gave her an impulse for mad adventures quite impossible in these civilized times, especially for a woman. 'You could use some of the old fish-songs Dad taught us, Ivor!' she proposed with enthusiasm. 'Remember this one ——'. And she began to sing:

*The tide has served; cast off, me lads!
The coast we'll swiftly roam.
Let them that may, go catch the fish,
But we will bring them home!*

And the chorus:

*We're out to rob a salmon trap!
Yo ho! My bully boys, ho!
For the Fish Patrol we don't give a rap!
Yo ho ——*

'Oh!' she broke off. 'I'd love to take a fling at being a pirate once, just to see ——'

'We could make the Lynx the hero of our musical comedy!' interrupted Eve. 'I wonder what kind of a chap he really is, Tyler? Old, or young?'

Tyler poured himself another glass of wine. 'Perhaps he's one of those fellows back from overseas trying to get a kick out of life and making a living at the same time,' he said casually. 'I know a lot of them. The ordinary, humdrum way of industry seems to drive them a little mad.' He was silent a moment, considering. 'It's as if, after spending three or four years working up to a climax, the music stopped in one great crash. And the silence shatters them.'

Dian was aware that the trend of his thought was sobering. His slim right hand resting on the table drew her attention; though he sat very still, the tip of his thumb was slowly moving round and round the maimed end of his little finger.

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'You can imagine,' he went on, 'after shoving aside a still twitching thing that was once a man to let a lorry go by; after making a dash across an open space between salvos of shell-fire; after picking up maimed and mangled children in the wake of a retreating army, a man isn't the same as he was before. Something dies in him, leaving a void. He craves action, the fierce white light of excitement, anything to help him fill the emptiness. And he finds life in America now a lot like — well, playing poker for matches. Nietzsche says the two things needed by the true man are danger and play' — he stopped and grinned at his brother — 'and pirating offers both. A nice clean thrill. It tests a man's mettle and his wit also to out-smart or bribe a watchman, or to escape the Pirate Patrol with an ex-pirate in command, or to elude the most serious of all — the Government Patrol.'

'You see,' put in Jim with suspicious gentleness, 'Alaska is distinguished by having among its fish pirates men who went overseas to fight for a foreign country and came back to prey upon their own.'

Something Tyler started to say was cut short by Eve's quick protest: 'Oh, there you two go again, getting grisly and serious! Come, everybody! Let's turn on the radio and dance!' She took Jim's arm with a pretty air of ownership and whispered something against his ear. They both laughed. She rose and began pulling gently at him until he, too, came to his feet.

Dian saw him looking past her, polite, remote, unconcerned. A curious sharp sense of loss came to her. Apparently the incidents of the afternoon that had torn her so bitterly had made no impression on him. He was eager to get away to dance with Eve.

A moment later, Eve, still holding to Jim's hand, ran playfully ahead towing his tall figure into the dimness of the unlighted living-room. Their heads were close as they

spun the radio dials. When the syncopated music flowed out, Eve melted into his opened arms and they moved off in the meshed steps of a fox-trot. Eve's bare right arm was about her partner's neck, and while her body from the waist down clung to him closely, she held her head back so she could look up into his face.

Dian, becoming suddenly aware of her scrutiny of the two, brought her gaze back to the table and encountered an expression on Ivor's young face that swept aside all thoughts of herself. Her brother was watching Eve with such a hell of jealousy and despair in his eyes that Dian could scarcely keep from crying out in pity. All her protective love for him rushed to arms against Eve.

'Ivor!' — she tried to make her voice sound gay — 'come, dance this one with me.'

He turned to her squaring his shoulders. A forced smile wavered to his lips. The gallant, futile attempt to mask his feelings brought a tightening in Dian's throat. 'No, thanks, Sis,' he said. 'You dance with Ty. I — I ——' As if against his will he was drawn to look again at the two in the twilight of the living-room. Eve was singing to the music as they danced, her eyes raised provocatively to Jim's face:

*The sky is blue... and high above,
The moon is new... and so is love...*

Ivor, gulping like a little boy, shoved his chair back. His face had gone pale. 'I — just remembered I have to see a fellow over at the China-House.' His voice was low and strained and not quite steady. 'If you don't mind, Dian, I'll run along now. And — maybe I'll be back later.'

He started across the veranda.

'Wait a minute, son!' called Sockeye. 'I've got to see the beach foreman before he turns in. I'll toddle along with you.'

Sockeye flopped his little hat over one eye and followed Ivor down the steps.

2

When they were alone at the table, Dian met Tyler's look of understanding. She was glad he said nothing. A silence lay between them filled by the music drifting out to become a part of the clear Northern afterglow. When Tyler came across to her side and held out his hands, she rose, and still without speaking they began to dance on the dim veranda.

Tyler's arms held her, strong, gently careless, sure. Her steps merged with his in a smooth, gliding rhythm like a dream sensation. It was balm to her troubled mind, lulling thought, easing body and spirit. She forgot the other couple dancing silently in the dim living-room... But after a while, almost imperceptibly, an awareness of Tyler himself came upon Dian. More than ever before she felt that fatal quality in him, something that made her think of swift things rushing to destruction, and not caring. It fascinated her. Yet she knew it was dangerous because it roused that in herself which bade her toss aside all responsibilities, repudiate all safe and sane ways of life.

As she danced on with Tyler, this feeling grew until it rose above her sensuous delight in their concordance of movement; until she and Tyler Kemerlee as physical entities seemed to vanish, while their subliminal selves swung out together and soared through space in lightness and lawless freedom. They were an inseparable part of an ancient, vaguely comprehended memory. Something swift and heedless and exultant. They were one with the eagle plunging from the sky upon his prey. They were one with the storm-driven combers that rushed devouringly upon the land. They were one with the wild wind that whitened the sea and carried away the sails of ships.

A break came in the music, but the mood lingered in Dian's quickened blood even after she and her partner paused at the veranda railing to look out over the quiet inlet. The harmony of steel guitars, plangent, questioning, floated down from the Oriental quarters adding a mystic charm to the end of the day. Colors — flame and palest green — washed clear about the deepening violet of the hills. Like a block print against the sky-bright water stood the silhouette of cannery docks, masts of the seining fleet, and the hull of the *Star of Alaska* thrusting its cordage high to lattice the sunset. But underlying all this quiescent loveliness Dian felt the night holding out an expectation, deliberate, haunting. Her mind was groping to grasp its significance when Tyler spoke:

'A man needs a companion to share beauty like this.'

She turned curiously to look at him. She had been considering him essentially a man of action, but several things he had said tonight were of a bitter, philosophical trend. He evidently had thought about life, pondered its meaning, its ugliness and its beauty; its good and its evil. And — her conclusion brought with it a sense of pause fraught with faint foreboding — all these were alike to Tyler Kemerlee.

His was the wisdom of the disenchanted.

'And you are the most satisfying companion I have ever found' — among women.' He had been talking for some minutes, but Dian, absorbed in her thoughts, had not listened. Now she became aware of the unusual sincerity in his voice. 'You are content to be a companion. And you know when to be silent.' His face was close to hers. He was looking at her with something like regret in his long narrow eyes. But before she could speak, he made a smiling, ironical grimace and paraphrased in his usual bantering tones: "'You could wreath with roses all my chains, Dian... till all the lamps go out!'"

Listening to the quotation, Dian thought, with faint disappointment: 'Now, he'll begin making the usual careless love.'

But he didn't. He said: 'That's why I'm sorry I must leave you now.'

'Oh!' Dian was frankly disconcerted. 'I hoped you were going to stay for a while.'

'Not tonight. I have an appointment with another fisherman over on the West Coast and I must catch this tide.'

Dian shrugged, then smiled. 'Well, being a fisherman's daughter I know how that is. "Men must work and women must weep... though the harbor bar be moaning."'

They danced together once more. Then Dian walked down to the dock with him.

After he had gone aboard the *Who Cares*, she stood watching his trim craft glide out into the channel. He leaned in the door of the pilot-house and raised his hand in a characteristic gesture of farewell. 'Wish me luck, Dian!'

In the gloaming his equivocal smile held a hint of irony.

3

After the seiner had gone, Dian turned and walked along the dock debating with herself whether or not she should go aboard the *Star*. Tonight she seemed to be the only one at Sunny Cove without a companion. Everywhere along the green-bordered trails dapper Filipinos were sauntering with their sweethearts. Down the beach, where the ebbing tide had left a crescent of smooth sand, others were strolling hand in hand. A laughing couple passed her close on a near-by path. She recognized them with surprise, Augustine walking alone with the Thlinget girl whose favors he and Primo had been sharing. Even as she wondered where Primo could be, she saw him following some distance

behind. His hands were in his pockets, his head was sunk between his shoulders and his lean dark chin thrust out. For a moment Dian fancied there was a stealthy, catlike quality in his tread; but when she called to him, he turned a grinning face to answer her greeting.

She felt a growing restlessness. The long sunset had faded and the Northern world was now bathed in the luminous golden twilight that marks its summer nights. There was something gently electric in the atmosphere that made her reluctant to go indoors, yet it also made it impossible for her to walk alone. Her eyes followed the curve of the inlet in search of Tyler's boat, but she could see only the dim wake where the *Who Cares* had rounded a point a mile below the cannery — a ripple of gold that merged with the penumbral shadow of the shore.

She came to an undecided pause. Perhaps, after all, it was better to go back to the *Star*... Still, at night the old bark was a lonesome place when she was the only one aboard. And there were strange sad noises — the protest of the leashed ship as the tide swung her against the dock; the low groan of the masts as she tugged with the current...

The sound of feminine laughter brought her gaze up to the knoll on which stood the Superintendent's House. Jim was helping Eve down the veranda steps. An icy tremor ran through Dian as she watched them move slowly along the trail that led to the big cedar up the creek. Eve, in coral chiffon and a white Spanish shawl, looked very little and lovely and feminine as she clung to her tall escort's arm. And he —

In sudden self-contempt at her concern, Dian dragged her eyes from the couple. Ivor flashed into her mind. Now he, too, would be alone. She must find him.

After she had inquired without success at the China-House, she went back to the Superintendent's House. She

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found Ivor in his own darkened room lying face down on the bed, his head buried in his arms.

Dian paused in the doorway looking at the slim length of him stretched there in belted cords and white polo shirt. She could see the sheen of his thick blond hair above the back of his neck, his neck which still retained its little-boy contours. There was something touching about this that sent a flood of pitying tenderness welling up in her; and regret that the small brother she had known was gone. Her longing to take him to the comfort of her arms fought with a desire to lay hands on Eve and rend her for the ache she had deliberately planted in Ivor's heart.

She stood uncertain, wondering how she might approach this new Ivor who had grown old enough to love a woman and be hurt by one. If she offered sympathy, he might resent it, might repulse her. It would be better perhaps if she came seeking sympathy instead of offering it.

'Ivor...' she began, stepping toward the bed.

He raised himself hastily and, swinging his long legs to the floor, sat rubbing his eyes with an elaborate assumption of sleepiness. 'Oh! Hello, Sis!' the casual tone was obviously forced. 'That wine of Sockeye's made me drowsy as the dickens. Anything wrong?'

Dian sat beside him and laid an arm across his shoulders. She knew Ivor never drank anything. 'Nothing wrong — exactly. But — you won't mind if I sit a while with you, Ivor? I — well, I feel a bit forlorn tonight with Dad gone and all.' She was surprised to find now that this was true. For some reason she felt that she and Ivor, for the first time in their sheltered lives, were facing issues without the powerful presence of their father to safeguard them.

Ivor sat without movement, without words. Was he, too, feeling something of this? While she waited for his response, sounds of the night drifted in through the open windows — the distant pulsing of power-boats up the

inlet; a long-drawn Indian call... low laughter... the strumming of guitars. Up at the Oriental quarters an effeminate Filipino voice rose in a love-song. And suddenly Ivor turned and buried his face against Dian's shoulder. As her arms went about him she recognized the song Eve had been singing to Jim Kemerlee as they danced:

*You came at last. Love had its day.
That day is past. You've gone away...*

Anger against Eve flared into Dian's mind, but with new wisdom she remained silent, gently rocking her brother back and forth. After a little while, to take Ivor's mind off his troubles, she began to talk of other things. For a moment she was tempted to tell him her suspicions of Jim Kemerlee, but intuition warned her to hold her tongue. Instead, she talked of their childhood, taking refuge herself from the present by turning to the past.

'Remember, Ivor, the bright blue dory Dad gave us when we were at Hidden Inlet Cannery? I was ten and you were four. We didn't mind that the boat was tied to the shore. We'd sit in it by the hour rowing with might and main. You, with a long stick and your blond curls blowing — oh, but you were a darling little boy, Ivor! — and I struggling with a big oar from a seine-boat.... There were hundreds of seiners at the cannery in those days. I can see the tugs now, going out at sunset, towing the long strings of little open boats — Columbia River fishing boats — with the fishermen singing and the ripples from every bow turning fiery gold in the afterglow.... And remember the fights the men used to have — Swedes going after each other with clubs and fists; Italians and Australians with knives, and our dad rushing in barehanded, bringing them to order. Dad is wonderful, Ivor. Strong. Invincible. Not afraid of anything in the world...'

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Her voice trailed off, and after a moment's silence Ivor's head came up. A grin broke the solemnity of his face.

'Remember the Eagle's going out on the porch every evening to take a look at the weather, Dian? And you and I, just little shavers, toddling along so he could teach us how to tell whether or not the next day would be good for fishing?' Brother and sister, looking at each other in the dusk, simultaneously threw their voices into a deep register and recited after the manner of Eagle Turlon:

*When the sun goes down in a bank to rest,
The wind is going to blow from the West.
When the sun goes down clear as a bell,
The wind will be easterly, sure as hell!*

They laughed together; and then, becoming a little lonely, leaned against each other and talked of the days when their mother had been with them — the happiness of their family life; her blonde loveliness; the gayety of social affairs at the cannery, with parties and dances and music on the cleared deck of the *Star of Alaska* lying at the dock awaiting the pack; the lavish entertainment of distinguished visitors and Government officials from cutters and warships cruising the coast.

'Ivor!' Dian decided impulsively. 'Let's have one more big party aboard the *Star* and make it as much as possible like those Mother gave. We'll invite folks out from Ketchikan and have Briny and Blossom provide the eats and drinks, just as they used to, and ——'

'And leave the music to me, Sis!' Ivor's interest was fully aroused.

They plunged into plans that kept them occupied for an hour. When Dian finally said good-night, she departed feeling that Ivor was happier and that something of her own serenity had been restored.

She walked down to the dock and ascended the gang-

plank of the *Star* to find that Eve had not yet come aboard. After preparing for bed, she wrapped herself in a quilted robe and, as she often did, went out on deck again. She paused at the stern, leaning back against the great unhoused wheel for a last look at the mellowed radiance of the night.

The timbered mountains, plushed with amethyst, lay against a sky of clearest gold. In the aureate twilight the wilderness dreamed in peace and beauty — such ineffable beauty that Dian's heart swelled and ached with longing to hold to it, to become a part of it. She thought of the future when she should be gone from Alaskan shores — the procession of such summer nights that she would never see, and involuntarily her bare arm tightened about the spoke of the oaken wheel.

It was some time later when she saw Eve and Jim come sauntering down between the cannery buildings. They crossed the dock and paused below the stern of the *Star* to say good-night. Dian tried to call out gayly to them, but the remembrance of Eve's share in Ivor's unhappiness and her own recent difficulties with Jim Kemerlee made it impossible.

Meanwhile, the two in the amber gloaming were oblivious of everything but themselves. Jim stood backed against the wall of a toolhouse; Eve, close, was looking up at him. Dian could see nothing but the girl's profile, yet she knew the very expression of those wide, misty-blue eyes in the vivid, heart-shaped face. Eve's 'man-killing' look, as she herself described it when telling of her conquests.

'Jim-my...' The cooing words floated up with provocative pauses between. 'You don't know how I admire men like you. Out in the world doing worth-while things... I wish I'd been born a man. I'd be doing just the kind of work you're doing. But' — she flung out both tiny hands

— 'look at me! I'm so little and helpless... I need someone to take care of me...'

Dian heard Jim's quiet, indulgent laugh. 'I'm glad you weren't born a man, Satin-and-Silk. If you had been, a lovely and most amusing bit of femininity would have been lost to the world.'

'Oh-h-h... Jimmy! It's sweet of you to say that. But — I wonder if you say it to every girl you meet?... No matter. I l-l-like you just the same, Jimmy... And I adore your hands. They are so... so...'

Eve, holding one of Jim's hands between both her own to compare the size of it with her small one, gently slipped wanton fingers under his cuff and began moving them lightly over the sensitive skin on the inside of his wrist.

Down South, Dian had listened unmoved while Eve had described the effect of this contact on other men. But now she was seized with an unreasonable and unaccountable fury. Her lip curled back. Her hands clenched. Hot red waves of hate flowed over her. She hungered to drag Eve off by the hair. To sink her teeth into Eve's little white throat. To dig Eve's heart out with her naked hands. It was an emotion terrible, devastating, yet somehow fiercely satisfying. When she came to herself, she was saying under her breath: 'God... God... God...' She was shaking in every limb.

Turning her back on the couple below, she ran purblindly into the dimness of her stateroom.

She closed the door and braced herself against it, rigid, frightened. She could feel her heart beating against her side; its loud thumping filled her ears. Across the room a long mirror gave back a slim girl with an unfastened robe of jade satin slipping from her sheer nightgown; pale-gold hair disheveled about a tensed, narrow face; eyes burning with a wild, lambent light. Dian started forward and with a gasp recognized herself.

Slowly, almost warily, she continued stepping toward her reflection, a wondering horror at herself changing gradually to scorn. 'What is he to you?' Mentally she began addressing the girl in the mirror. 'Why should you care what she does to him? You wanted her to leave Ivor alone. She's doing it. Now, if she turns her wiles on Jim Kemerlee, you shouldn't care.'

But she did care. She cared with an intensity that made her suddenly sink her face in her raised palms to shut out that picture of Eve seductively running her fingers over Jim's tanned hands. She remembered with a poignant sense of frustration that she, Dian, had never touched him. Never shaken hands with him. Never danced with him. But Eve? What had happened up at the cedar tree tonight? Had Eve sat there with Jim as she had with Ivor —?

She shook herself and tossed her unbound hair back from her face. What had come over her that she could feel such appalling impulses toward Eve? Could it be that she was jealous? Jealous of a man she had known but a fortnight? A man she heartily disliked?

Bewildered by the savagery of her unwonted emotions and ashamed of them, Dian presently forced herself to go into Eve's stateroom to perform the small nightly services that were her personal contribution to the comfort of her visitor.... It came back to her that to Eve every man was a challenge. Eve was continually lighting emotional fires she didn't know how to put out.... Dian wished with all her heart she had never brought her on this trip.

The room held a fragrance that was Eve's — *Le Tabac Blond*, tinged faintly with the smoke of cigarettes. Penetrating. Cloying. Insidious. Dian found it all these things tonight. 'But,' she reminded herself aloud through closed teeth, 'you've got to remember she's still your guest — damn her!'

She looked about for Eve's cigarettes, and finding them, set them down on the night table with a thump. She turned down the covers of the bed and then, catching up the pillows, which Eve liked to have plumped into softness, she punched them so long and vigorously that bits of eider-down rose in gentle protest and went sailing out the open porthole above her head.

CHAPTER SEVEN

I

IT WAS Saturday night, and in the golden nocturnal light all at Sunny Cove were making merry.

The Filipinos and Indians, having a party of their own, were dancing on the tennis-court with the abandon of children. Moored along the cannery float, nuzzling the utilitarian seine-boats, were dozens of pleasure cruisers that had transported the Turlon guests from Ketchikan. Dian and Ivor, following the tradition established by the first packers, were entertaining aboard the *Star of Alaska*.

The old packet in its palmiest days had never looked gayer. From figurehead to taffrail it was festooned with hemlock boughs and wild-flowers. The cordage was hung with green branches and Chinese lanterns that gave off a mellowed glow little brighter than the clear amber sky. Hatches, padded with 'hemlock feathers,' were covered with white and green Hudson's Bay blankets, and the deck was strewn with cushioned chairs.

At the stern the unhoused wheel had been converted into a background for the musicians. They were led by Ivor who had brought the piano outdoors for the occasion. The waxed deck about them was awhirl with dancers in colorful sports clothes, with here and there the smart uniform of the Geodetic Survey. Men and girls overran the ship, laughing, exploring, flirting; and every dusky corner held its murmuring couple.

Sounds of culinary activity came from the galley, where Blossom Dow was superintending the preparation of a buffet supper soon to be served; and the fragrance of brewing coffee floated out to mingle pleasantly with the redo-

lence of fresh-cut hemlock. Briny Dow presided at the punchbowl in a green nest he had arranged in the bow of the ship. His adenoidal countenance appeared, brown and assured, above a white monkey jacket, and by way of a festive touch he had girdled himself with a vermilion cummerbund, a souvenir of his tropic wanderings.

As a lively dance number left him alone for a few moments, he stepped outside his bower for a look around; but before he had gone two paces Eve Galliard came drifting toward him. She looked very small and young and innocent in powder blue.

'Oh, Briny! How nice to find you by yourself!' After a furtive glance to the right and to the left, she curved one hand about her painted mouth, leaned forward, and whispered in his ear: 'Be a dear and shake me up one of your beautiful white drinks — you know, the kind that has a kick in it. This pink punch is detestable.' She puckered her tiny mouth and looked up at him out of the corners of her eyes.

'Wot ho!' softly exclaimed Briny, regarding her with delighted interest. 'I knew you was a lidy wot properly appreciated a bit of all right!' Starting off with a hornpipe step he made his way back behind the table that held the punchbowl. There he stood a moment, one hand raised as if in benediction. 'Watch me!' he besought her, slowly closing one eye.

With an air of mystery he began putting ingredients into a cocktail-shaker. 'You know, Miss Heve, it 'eartens a man to be appreciated. This Blossom woman o' mine don't give me credit. She's allus throwin' up to me wot a 'igh clarse mixer some bartender cove was she was sweet on onct down in 'Frisco. But if I do say it, I can toss up a drink o' liquor wiv the best o' them. I'm fancy wiv it, too. Now, watch ——'

He closed his eyes and, with the beatific expression of a

saint listening to celestial music, agitated the shaker first on one side of his head, then on the other. With a flourish he brought it down in front of him to give it the final joggle.

'Moose-milk!' He announced its completion triumphantly, and made a rite of pouring it by touching the shaker to the rim of the glass, then withdrawing it nicely to let the smooth, creamy liquid flow from on high. 'Mikes your 'air curl and the arches o' your feet tingle, Miss Heve.' With a bow he handed the glass across the table to Eve. 'I learns 'ow to mike it from trappers up on the Stikine River one time wen Blossom rows wiv me and I tikes service wiv a baronet wot goes 'untin' big gime up there.'

Eve sampled the drink. 'It's simply delicious, Briny!' She gave him a smile coupled with a lifting of her lashes. 'What a man you are!' Her words were for him, but her gaze left his face immediately to move searchingly about the deck.

'Arrr, now, Miss Heve' — Briny expanded under the flattery — 'it's a real pleasure to do things for a lidy like you.... If you'll excuse me, you're the spittin' image o' a gal I 'ad in Honoluly, onct — oh, not 'igh clarss like you, Miss Heve, but so 'elp me, she 'ad the same trim lines to her jib, and ——'

'Oh, really!' Eve mechanically handed him her empty glass, her eyes still moving restlessly about the deck. Then she turned to him and asked in a lowered voice: 'Do you know where Mr. Tyler Kemerlee is, Briny?'

'Him? Wy, I seen 'im dancin' wiv Miss Dian a while back. But right now I don't know w'ere he's got to.'

Eve started to walk away, stopped, and stood thoughtfully biting her upper lip. Her face settled into older lines. After a moment's preoccupation, without looking at Briny, she ordered him to pour her another drink.

Obediently the little man took up the cocktail-shaker,

but, instead of filling the glass, he clutched the container, his pale eyes shifting uncertainly between it and the girl. He cleared his throat. 'Well, now, Miss Heve, if I may be so bold, one snifter o' this 'ere moose-milk is fine for lities, but it's a bit heady, and Miss Dian might not like for me to give you too much at her party — you not bein' used to it an' all.'

Eve glanced up with a quick frown that smoothed out instantly as she focused her attention on the reluctant Briny. 'Oh, come now ——' Her voice wheedled, and, leaning over to peer into the shaker, she permitted one hand to brush lightly across his. 'See' — a tiny finger pointed down — 'there's just a teeny, weenie, little swallow left. Surely, Briny, you don't think I can't handle one more small drink?' She looked up, unveiling her blue gaze with a beguiling smile.

'Oh... arrr... No, Miss Heve! O' course I didn't mean nothing like that!' stammered Briny, hypnotically filling the glass she held out to him. 'Nothing like that a-tall. Wy, Gor'struth, Miss, you 'andles your liquor like a toff. In fack' — with growing assurance — 'you reminds me o' a swell bit o' fluff I used to walk out wiv once wen my ship was tied up in Yarmouth. She were a lidy's maid, and 'ow she —— Oh!' He jumped like a startled rabbit. Blossom, wide and short in a scarlet dress, stood regarding him sourly through half-closed eyes. 'Oh, 'ello, Blossom! I didn't 'ear you come! 'Ow's everything, my dear? Can I... can I...' His voice trailed off into silence and with furious concentration he began polishing a glass.

Blossom jerked her dark head to indicate the dancers at the other end of the ship. 'They want Miss Galliard!' she lashed out, her black eyes studiously avoiding Eve.

Eve deliberately drank the last of her moose-milk and with a languid air handed the glass to Briny. 'Thank you so much,' she murmured, her voice deep and sweet. 'It

was charming of you to take so much pains with my punch.' She turned slowly from him and moved off down the deck, her wide, bemused look ignoring the glowering Blossom.

Briny's spouse, emphatically spacing her words, addressed him in low, vehement tones: 'You — lousy — Limehouse — whelp! You — mise'able — little — scut! Strutting your stuff for her, was you? First thing I know she'll be vamping you, too. Anything with pants on goes with that one!'

'Ere! 'ere!' protested Briny, looking warily about. 'Miss Heve wouldn't think o' sparkin' wiv the likes o' me! She's a lidy. She ——'

'Lady! Hell! She's a little cat! I been keeping an eye on her tonight. She's got that poor kid Ivor so stuck on her he's ready to do a Dutch over the side of the ship right now because she won't dance with him. Had her fling with the boy, and now she's let him down cold. Damn her, she's ——'

'We-ll, Ivor is a bit young ——'

'Young or old, it's all the same to her. Didn't I see her making a strong play for Jim Kemerlee the first part of the evening — backing him into a corner and looking up in his face and pawing him? But I reckon Jim's wise to dames like her. So, when he breaks away from her, she flags Lem Hanley, and she keeps him cached with her in the charthouse so long Mrs. Hanley's ready to go in there and tear her can off. Then the little tart ——'

'Ush! Not so loud, Blossom. You mustn't ——'

'—— takes a twirl at young Doctor Barker. And him on his honeymoon. Dances three times with him in succession, her plastered up against him closer than the skin on a grape. And Mrs. Doctor piping 'em off the whole time and getting so hopping mad she's about to snatch Doc right off the floor and take him back to Ketchikan when Dian gets on the job and smooths things over in that nice

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way of hers. I knew if something didn't happen to make this cheechako jane lay off the married men, some of the wives 'ud be grabbing a smoke wagon and fogging up this party. Then the lit-tul stinker' — Blossom hissed the last word — 'sees how attentive Tyler is to Dian, so she starts playing her cards for Ty. But something side-tracked her' — Blossom pierced Briny with a fierce, accusing look — 'and I find her here with you!'

Briny, penned in his bower, darted cornered-rat glances from side to side.

'No, you don't!' countered Blossom. 'You stay right where you are!' With vindictive scorn she mimicked Eve's slow speech: "'It was so charming of you, Briny, to take such pains with my punch!" Punch? Humph! She was here spearing a shot of strong hootch off you. That sister can't fool me. But you, you poor buck-toothed Limey! You fall for her play. Lady, says you. Pooh! Her work's coarse as squaw's hair and she ain't got no more morals than a mink!'

Blossom turned her broad back and mouthing potent, inaudible words, tottered on her high heels toward the galley.

2

After supper, when the hilarity was at its height, Dian, a little weary, slipped away to her stateroom. She left the door open so that she might hear readily if anyone came in search of her, and threw herself down on the couch to rest. The evening, because of Eve's indiscriminate flirting, had not been one of unalloyed harmony for Dian, and she was glad to be alone for a little while in the soothing darkness of her mother's room.

As she lay reviewing the incidents of the last few hours, she was aware of a vague disappointment. She realized

that subconsciously she had been expecting something from this night. She didn't know exactly what it was — but she knew it had not happened.

Jim Kemerlee's dark face flashed before her. As superintendent of Sunny Cove he was host with Ivor tonight. She paid him grudging tribute for his comity, the manner in which he made himself charming to every woman on the ship. Every woman — except Dian herself. To her he had been distantly polite. And he had not asked her to dance.

Tyler, on the other hand, had been at her side constantly, helpful, attentive to her personal wants, carelessly gay. She felt his liking for her; felt that something in her called to something in him; yet she sensed a curious contradictory passiveness beneath his devotion. It was as if she had advanced just so far and had come up against a spiritual barrier — a wall formed by some baffling lack in his nature.

But, she admitted to herself, he was fascinating, both because he suggested lawless freedom and because of a certain challenge that lay in his strange, negative quality. ... He stirred the imagination without satisfying it. She could imagine herself loving Tyler Kemerlee in a mad, reckless, frustrated way; never being really happy in her love because she would always be bruising herself against that barrier, trying to beat it down, hoping that behind it she would find something wonderful. And she might even break her heart striving to reach something — she was almost sure — that was not there.

Lying in the dark, Dian tried to contrast the two brothers, Jim and Tyler, but almost at once her thoughts began to slide into one another. Finally they merged with the lulling sounds that came from the deck outside: laughter, the murmuring of guests, the muted throb of dance-music. And presently she drowsed.

She came back to consciousness dimly aware that a

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low-voiced dialogue was going on in the Captain's sitting-room just across the passage. Her nap had refreshed her and she was stretching luxuriously before getting up to return to the deck, when sentences drifted clearly in to her: 'Why do you care where Dian is? I'm just as attractive if you'd take the trouble to find out. But you never notice me... You hate me, I think.'

'Hate you...?' The masculine tones were carelessly caressing. 'On the contrary. But I'm telling you now, honey-chile, if you don't want something to happen to you, you'd better get away from me.' There was a slight pause. Then: 'I'm warning you, baby.' The lazy voice ended in a laugh that had a soft touch of malice in it.

Dian, intending to announce her whereabouts, raised her head hastily. The open door revealed the dimly lighted room across the way and a profile view of Tyler Kemerlee sitting on the edge of a table. Between his knees stood Eve. She was holding his right hand in one of hers, regarding it with avid intentness as she ran her fingers over it.

Dian got up swiftly and silently to close her door. Before she reached it, Eve bent her head, and with a strange little moan began passionately to kiss Tyler's maimed hand.

Dian shoved her door shut and leaned back against it. She felt nauseated. She wondered at the feeling of repugnance which appalled her by its very vagueness...

Later, in the crystal radiance of dawn when the guests were embarking for home, Eve came running to Dian and surprisingly announced her intention of leaving for Ketchikan.

'But Eve! I can't go in with you now!' protested Dian, following her into her stateroom. 'Wait until tomorrow and ——'

'I don't want you to go in with me, darling! It really wouldn't be worth the effort for you because I'll be gone only a day, and' — she darted here and there snatching up her belongings — 'Tyler's taking some of the town girls in on the *Who Cares*. He — they — want me to go with them.' There was a curious excitement underlying her words. 'Here, honey! Fold that like a good child' — she tossed a flaming velvet negligée to Dian. 'And see if my other red satin mule is behind the berth.' She was throwing things into her suitcase. 'You needn't worry about me, precious. And for goodness' sake don't think you have to rush into town after me. I'll take the key to the house and Suey Woo will ——'

'Eve!' Ivor burst into the stateroom. 'What's this about your going in to Ketchikan?'

She whirled upon him, resentful, annoyed. 'Why, I'm just going, that's all.'

'I won't have it, Eve! I ——'

'You won't have it! Don't be ridiculous, my dear child. You have nothing to say about it. I've got to go in to — to — well, to attend to some of my own business.'

'Business!' Ivor came close and glared down at her. 'Don't lie! You're going in because you want to be with Tyler Kemerlee. I won't stand for it, Eve. I ——'

'Oh, good Heavens!' She threw up both hands. 'This is what I get for allowing myself to be bored to death by a youngster. It certainly has been a lesson to me! After this' — she thrust her little white face at him, returning his glare with childish exasperation — 'I'll have nothing to do with any man unless he has a beard down to here!' She tapped an emphatic hand sideways against her waist.

'Oh, Eve...'

'Dian! Please take your brother out of here. I've got to change my dress. The others are waiting for me.'

Dian, biting her lips to keep back the angry words, took

Ivor by the arm. 'Come, dear.' But the boy made no move to go with her until Eve showed unmistakable signs of divesting herself of her frock.

In the light of the rising sun Dian and Ivor stood on the dock watching the departure of the flotilla of cruisers loaded with home-going merry-makers, all harmonizing their farewells. One by one the craft glided from the floats and sped down the inlet, leaving a wake of song on the air. After the last boat had disappeared round the point, the indetermination in Ivor's young face gave place to a look of desperate resolve. Dian, sensing the trend of his thought, reached for his hand and held it between both hers. 'Don't go after her, Ivor. Please,' she pleaded.

'I've got to, Sis. She's done something to me — I've got to follow her. But' — even in his anguish he considered his sister — 'if it will make you feel any easier, I promise I'll bunk down at Blossom's.'

Dian, knowing that Eve's interest in her brother was dead, would have given anything in the world to spare him the pain of disillusionment. But she felt also that, since it was inevitable, the sooner it came the better. She must not stand in the way of his solving his own problems.

Half an hour later, she saw him aboard a seiner bound for Ketchikan. Eve, she comforted herself, would be back at Sunny Cove tomorrow night.

3

Two days went by filling Dian with a growing unrest. She had heard nothing from her father. Sparks, when questioned, confided that there was about one chance in ten that her message would reach Eagle Turlon in Siberia.

After the excitement of the party, Dian felt more keenly than ever the deepening depression at Sunny Cove. The

run had not yet turned in along the Turlon traps. The fishing season was nearly half over. Jim Kemerlee had gone with a diver to repair the troublesome, but very valuable, standing trap on the Cape Fox shore. And today even Sockeye was absent, having been called up the creek to the dam to correct some breakage that was affecting the efficiency of the electric light plant.

Dian, sitting alone in her stateroom aboard the *Star of Alaska*, was turning these things over in her mind. But uppermost in her thoughts was her anxiety about her brother. Eve had not kept her word about returning to Sunny Cove. What could be keeping her in Ketchikan? What was happening to Ivor?... Her uncertainty and vague fears for the boy finally brought about her decision to run the *Golden Hind* in to town to find out.

She pulled a béret over her tawny hair, slipped into her suede jacket, and left the *Star* with the purpose of finding a dock hand who would fill up the gasoline tank on her cruiser.

It was a day that suited her mood — grey, overcast; a weather-breeder. Clots of mist were caught in the tops of the tallest trees along the shore. Everything beyond the first line of timbered hills was hidden by magnificent clouds, eerie white on the summits, mauve tinged underneath, and traveling fast. The sullen, lead-colored water quivered into changing lights under the swift fingering of intermittent winds.

When she came down the gangplank of the *Star*, she found the wharf deserted. She paused a moment to read the weather signs. 'I hope the darned breeze doesn't keep on getting stronger,' was her inward comment as her appraising gaze swung down the inlet that led toward Ketchikan.

Several seine-boats were in sight. One, fairly near, was the *Fort Tongass* on its way, no doubt, to the Island Pack-

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ing Company with another splendid haul from the West Coast. That made the third boat Dian had counted this afternoon, all carrying fish to the rival cannery.

Thinking of the single Sunny Cove seiner that had come in bringing a haul so light that Sockeye had not started up the lines to can it, Dian was flooded by a maddening sense of defeat. By what vagaries of Nature did the run favor the West Coast district less than seventy-five miles away, and shun the channels where the Turlon traps waited? The situation gave her a hopeless feeling, as if her father's company was somehow being hindered, tantalized by an unjust and malicious power. She had once heard him say, laughingly, that when the run held off a long time in his district, he felt a desperate impulse to beseech the gods, idols, the Deity, anything, in the hope that such action might help bring in the fish. She understood that now.

She said soberly under her breath: 'O Fog Woman! Call your North-born children home!'

Then her complex emotions of frustration and anxiety flared into quick, hot resentment against Jim Kemerlee. Were it not for the man's absurd ethics, Red Skain's haul, and perhaps the hauls of those others who passed this afternoon, would now be reënforcing the salmon already on the fish dock. Combined, there'd be enough to make a fair day's run.

She walked rapidly to the end of the wharf and stood watching the approaching *Fort Tongass*. Under her drawn brows her eyes were darkening like the wind-runes on the water; fine gold hair working out from under her béret blew about her intent face. Her green skirt flattened against her in the freshening wind.

The seine-boat was almost abreast the dock when Red Skain, as was his custom since his encounter with Jim Kemerlee, gave a taunting whistled salute. At the same time he maneuvered his craft closer so that those who were

on the wharf might see his catch — destined for a competitor. After the last derisive blast he turned the wheel over to one of his crew and slouched into the open door of his pilot-house.

For a moment Dian considered his hulking figure through narrowed eyes; then her face cleared and her slim, flexible body became alive with purpose. She leaned forward and with an eager, swinging arm beckoned to him.

At first he gave no sign that he saw her; but when she persisted, he turned his head and spoke to the man at the wheel. Immediately the bow of the *Fort Tongass* veered toward the fish elevator near which the girl stood.

When the pirate craft nudged the dock, Dian leaped lightly to its deck, her quick survey taking in the open hold amidships. It was full of salmon, firm, beautiful, silver and dark green. 'Hello, Red! You certainly have a fine haul!'

'Sure have, Miss Dian. The run ain't half-bad over on the West Coast.' As he spoke, his wary gaze searched the dock back of her. 'Has the boss come down off his high horse ready to do a little business?'

Dian laughed. 'Well — I don't know. You see Mr. Kemerlee's gone to the Cape Fox shore this afternoon, and just now I consider myself the boss.' She made her voice elaborately casual, but her father's gambling blood was singing in her veins. 'How about leaving your haul at Sunny Cove this afternoon?'

Red flicked her a glance. She could sense his thoughts going on behind his opaque eyes and suddenly she wished she had not called him in. But it was too late now. He kinked with sudden, loud laughter and slapped a hairy hand against his thigh. 'B'gosh!' he bellowed to the world at large. 'Just like her old dad! Eagle'd never let anyone put anything over on him either! W-e-l-l, Miss Dian, seeing as me and you's friends, I don't mind helping you get even with his nibs.'

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Dian flushed at this bald statement of the case, and she resented his air of connivance; but Sunny Cove needed those salmon. Jim Kemerlee might return within the hour. She must get the haul on the dock before he came back.

'I'm buying fish,' she said with a straight, cool look. 'If you're selling, we'll get down to business right now. I have to go to Ketchikan this afternoon.'

'Oh, fair enough, Miss Dian!' said Red hastily. 'Business it is. Now, I got ten thousand fish in my hold worth about two thousand dollars. But before I discharge here, I want to know who pays me.'

'You'll get credit on our books just as you've always done.'

Red Skain shifted his quid considerably; then shook his bullet head. 'Nothing doing!' He shot a thin brown squirt overboard and wiped off his chin. 'There'd be no credit for me with Jim Kemerlee running this outfit.'

Dian stood, her mind swiftly seeking a solution to the problem confronting her. Was Kemerlee to defeat her, even in his absence?

Two thousand dollars... As her eyes instinctively swept the inlet for signs of approaching craft, she remembered her own bank balance which her father had generously increased in view of her approaching wedding. She could manage the price. And Red Skain, she knew, was as eager to discharge his haul in defiance of Kemerlee as she was to have him. Yet something in her shrank from becoming a partner with the man in such a transaction. Why was she hesitating? Ten thousand fish meant nearly nine hundred cases toward the pack. In addition to getting the haul, it would be worth two thousand dollars to see the look Kemerlee would give her after he came back and discovered what she had done.

She faced the waiting Red. 'When your catch is on the dock,' she said crisply, 'I'll give you my personal check.'

But now, seeing his advantage, the man promptly tried to raise the price on her. Chafing at the delay which might bring the superintendent back before her purpose was accomplished, Dian, nevertheless, bargained in a manner that would have delighted Eagle Turlon's heart. At the end of ten minutes she had her way.

She swung herself back to the wharf.

In the absence of Sockeye, she had no difficulty persuading the tallyman to set the elevator going. Two of the discharging crew appeared in their protective rubber suits, young fellows who leaped into the hold of the *Fort Tongass*, sliding, laughing, shouting as they acquired a precarious footing on the shimmering mass of fish. With *pious*, the one-tined pitchfork of the fisherman, they began tossing salmon onto the endless chain conveyer that carried them up through the tally cage and onto the fish dock.

Dian buttoned her jacket close about her throat to keep out the rising wind, and walked briskly up and down watching the unloading with a triumphant sense of accomplishment.

The news that Eagle Turlon's daughter had bought a pirate haul in defiance of the superintendent spread swiftly about the cannery bringing every idle man to the scene. Dian, aware of her audience, felt an elation, physical and mental. Many of these men had seen her discountenanced by Jim Kemerlee. Now they should witness her retaliation.

She laughed outright at the expression on the wide, honest face of Olaf, the beach foreman, who had known her ever since she was a baby. He approached her, head and upraised finger shaking disapproval.

'Miss Dian! You didn't ought to do it!' His words reproved her, but his pale eyes beamed gratification at the splendid haul she had bought.

'Now, Olaf, don't think you're deceiving me!' Smiling,

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she shook her finger back at him. 'You want those fish as much as I do!' And she passed on, leaving him with his face working between a grin and a frown.

His attitude typified that of every other member of her father's crew. Each resented a woman's interference in the conduct of the plant, yet there wasn't one of them who didn't rejoice to see that shining stream moving up to the canning dock.

As Dian tramped up and down watching the unloading, her gaze kept turning to scan the grey-green inlet which the steadily stiffening breeze had whipped into whitecaps. Rough weather, she thought with satisfaction, lessened the chance of Kemerlee's immediate return. Yet she felt a growing tension. She longed to do something to hasten the crawling progress of the elevator.

When Sparks came down to hand her a radiogram, she thrust it into her pocket unopened. It was, without a doubt, from Alan, but she found herself unable to read it just now. She'd wait until the haul was safely out on the dock. Sockeye was due any moment and she'd have him start up the lines immediately and get the salmon in the cans. After that — let the superintendent come!

She lifted her face to the wind and, moving her shoulders inside her suede jacket, began to hum nervously. Her uneasy pacing took her to the farthest end of the wharf to search the waters with increased intentness. Suddenly she stiffened; the humming died in her throat. Around the point a craft had shot into view, a small, open-cockpit cruiser that came leaping over the roughened inlet flinging fans of spray from either side.

Jim Kemerlee!

A cool, thin thrill went through her. She tried to keep down an inner trembling that assailed her. A swift survey of the *Fort Tongass's* hold revealed that little more than a thousand fish had been unloaded. She was in for a battle.

Her eyes went back to the flying cruiser and with the courage of those quick to anger, her chin came up. A moment more and her fighting Irish blood began to course through her veins, energizing, intoxicating her, filling her with eagerness for the coming conflict. Her hands in her pockets formed little fists.

The cruiser swung in to the float and Kemerlee stepped out to make fast. Dian, assuming an appearance of unconcern, drew a cigarette from her case and, standing with her back to the wind, lighted it.

Though the superintendent must have appraised and understood the situation before he landed, he came up the slip to the wharf in his usual unhurried manner. He beckoned Olaf from the crowd and gave him some calm, low-voiced directions. Olaf nodded vehemently; then plodded on up to the tally cage.

While Dian continued to smoke and talk to Red Skain, she was nevertheless aware the moment Kemerlee wheeled and started toward the *Fort Tongass*. The idlers fell back. Red's darting glances betrayed his uneasiness. Kemerlee stepped to the edge of the dock and looked down into the hold of the pirate craft. The salmon-pitchers stopped swinging their *pius*. A moment later the elevator ceased running. The spectators were held by a vibrant silence.

After a moment the superintendent turned to Red Skain. 'Who gave you permission to discharge here?'

The man hoisted his trousers and cleared his throat. 'Why — uh —'

'It was I who told him to unload!' interrupted Dian crisply. She came quickly forward and stood beside the two. 'I bought his haul. I'm paying for it personally.' Tossing her cigarette into the water, she thrust her hands into her jacket pockets and looked defiance from under level brows.

Kemerlee returned her gaze, coolly, impersonally. 'I

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see,' he considered. 'The fish are undoubtedly yours. But you have no authority to discharge them at Sunny Cove. Under the circumstances I must remove them from our dock.'

'Your dock! You forget yourself! This is my father's plant. You don't dare ——'

'I'm in charge here until your father fires me. I tolerate no interference with my conduct of a cannery. Furthermore, while I'm superintendent at Sunny Cove no pirate fish go through the Iron Chinks. I don't deal with thieves.'

Red Skain took a step toward Kemerlee, hands doubling into fists, underjaw outthrust. 'Where do you get that thief stuff, young feller?' he blustered.

'What I just said goes, Red. You can take it or leave it.'

'By God, I'll make you prove it. I made my last set not six hours ago. My boys'll swear to that in ——'

Kemerlee cut him short with a laugh. 'You say you caught those fish in a seine six hours ago? You, with nets and cork floats dry as a bone right now? Why, a baby would recognize that as a trap haul ——' He jerked his hand toward the hold where salmon were mixed with occasional herring, flounders, cod. 'Who ever heard of a seine's bringing up such a collection! However, that's your affair. What concerns me is this: after what I told you the other day, you sneaked in here during my absence and not only tried to put something over on me, but you've taken advantage of a girl who —— Oh, right here, Olaf!' he broke off to direct the beach foreman who was approaching with a long wooden chute on his shoulder.

Olaf slanted the trough from the edge of the dock into the hold of the *Fort Tongass* and stepped aside just as a brigade of Filipinos moved up. Each man was trundling a hand-truck with a box of salmon on it. The leader of the procession heaved the contents of his box into the chute and swung aside to go back for another load.

'I'm returning your plunder, Red,' Kemerlee said curtly as the fish went slithering down into the hold. 'The next time you come here trying to sell such a haul, I'll pitch you off the dock.'

Red Skain gurgled with suppressed fury. Before he could articulate, Dian shoved him aside and faced the superintendent, her grey eyes blazing under her wind-blown hair. 'Now, I'll tell you something!' Her words came low, unsteady with rage. 'It's easy for you to take this stand against men like Red. You haven't a cent invested. Not a thing at stake. You're running another man's plant and — running it to make it fail! Who are you, to talk of taking advantage of any one! You, who came here when my father was on the other side of the world and persuaded Sockeye to hire you!' She pointed to the Filipinos stolidly dumping salmon back into the *Fort Tongass's* hold. 'You use my father's own men to injure him ——' Her voice broke and she was near to tears, but she finished with bitter spirit. 'I know how well you laid your plans to ruin Sunny Cove, you — you — Kemerlee!'

His cold eyes pierced her and the line of his jaw went pale. 'You're right,' he said in a deadly, even voice. 'I laid my plans well for Sunny Cove. For the first time this cannery is being run absolutely on the square.'

'Red!' Dian whirled on the scowling fisherman. 'Are you going to stand for this? Are you going to let him insult you, me, Dad — all of us? What's the matter with you? Are you afraid of him?'

'Saaaay!' Red Skain dragged the word out with an ugly downward inflection. His look connoted an eagerness to take his chagrin out on some one weaker than himself. 'What-a you tryin' to cook up for me now? Ain't you got me in enough trouble a-ready? Coaxing me in here and palavering me into unloading when this fellow was gone! I wouldn't-a done it if it hadn't been for you. And see

what happens?' — he jerked a thick thumb at the Filipinos. 'Slings my fish back into my face, this Sunday-School guy does! But wait! I'll fix him for that!' His eyes lighted balefully. 'And as for you, Miss Lady! Let me give you a little tip: before you try pulling any more swift ones round this dump, you get better control of your man, see? You ain't got him tamed yet like you had Noel Thomas. But maybe——' He hesitated and started to back warily toward his boat. 'Maybe if you was to spend one of those nice week-ends with him, like you done that time with Noel Th——'

The word ended in a grunt as Kemerlee, scarcely seeming to move his feet, swung his fist to the point of Red Skain's jaw. While the fellow tottered off balance, the younger man laid hold of his greasy collar and in a matter-of-fact way heaved him into the slimy chute.

Red shot down like a greased pig and lit with a yell on his stomach among the fish. He floundered there, cursing and trying to regain his feet. With every effort the slippery salmon eluded his clutching fingers and scooted from him in all directions. Each wallowing failure to rise brought whoops of derisive laughter from the delighted, thigh-slapping canning crew crouched along the edge of the dock.

Kemerlee shook his right hand to ease the sting of bruised knuckles, and, stepping to the brink of the wharf, surveyed the commotion in the finny hold of the *Fort Tongass*. There was a slight quiver in his nostrils; a joyous fighting light in his eyes.

He waited until the pirate's furious, scale-covered face looked up from its piscatory background; then he said in a voice, not loud but of unmistakable portent:

'Now, you get the hell out of here! Understand? And stay out.'

Dian, burning with shame and humiliation, turned from the scene and walked rapidly toward the *Star*.

In the haven of her own room she sank into her mother's deep chair and buried her face against its back, trying to shut out the look of Red Skain's leering face. Waves of shame enveloped her. It was unjust, incredible, that any man should talk to Dian Turlon as Red Skain had talked. And before her father's men — and Jim Kemerlee. How could anything so degrading, so soul-searing, have happened to her? She felt hopelessly dishonored.

Writhing in the first poignancy of her mortification, she felt as if her whole life would be smirched by this affair. The torture of it drew sharp, tearless sobs from her. She beat her clenched hands against the padded back of the chair.

Need of her father overwhelmed her — a great longing to take refuge in the shelter of his warm, powerful arms. He would know how to ease her wounded pride, how to comfort her. Or Alan. She was suddenly terribly homesick for Alan. And he wasn't coming to her. Even Ivor was gone. Alone she had to live through this devastating thing that had come upon her. For a moment tears blurred her vision as she gave way to the weakness of self-pity. Then sternly she sat upright and blinked the moisture from her eyes. She was reaching into her pocket for a handkerchief when her hand encountered the radiogram Sparks had brought her half an hour before.

Hastily she tore open the envelope and read the typed sheet that was inside. Alan! It was as if he had sent her a message of love in her hour of need. Never since she had left him had she been so glad to hear from him, so glad he loved her and was lonely for her. He besought her to hasten her return as he and mutual friends were still

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postponing the trip to Palm Springs until she could join them.

She sat staring at the saffron paper with eyes that saw through it to that distant California Araby where, only last year, she and those friends had spent delightful weeks. It lay before her mind's eye enticing her: sun-flooded palms, cool green water in marble pools, red-tiled roofs above the flower-hung balconies of luxurious hotels. Men and girls were there in the smart habiliments of summer, gay, light-hearted folk with no thought but pleasure. Golden days, riding and picnicking in purple canyons. Moonlight nights beside fountains. Dinner dances amid El Mirador's Spanish brightness — red-violet hangings, leather chairs of sapphire blue, music that ravished the heart and winged the feet.... Her friends of the South thought enough of her to postpone their holiday in such a paradise until she could join them! And she — she had lingered deliberately at an Alaskan salmon cannery putting up with crudities, discomforts; enduring insufferable familiarities, incredible insults from —

In a flash of anger she sprang from her chair — anger directed, incongruously, not at Red Skain, but at Jim Kemerlee. With an air of decision she took her jewel-case from a locker, picked out her engagement ring, and slipping it back on her finger kissed it remorsefully. Then she flung off her jacket, dragged her suitcase out from under the berth, and with deft, swift hands began to pack her belongings. Her mind was made up: she would leave for Ketchikan at once. A Southbound steamer was due there tomorrow afternoon. She would take it for Seattle, where she would board the first airplane that left for California.

She'd had enough of Jim Kemerlee, of Sunny Cove. Yes, even of Alaska.

She packed Eve's things with her own and, when she had finished, went out on deck and called to an Indian boy

to take her baggage and place it aboard the *Golden Hind*. He had scarcely reached the gangplank when Dian got into her jacket. Even though this was the last time she would ever occupy the old stateroom, she was not going to linger. She pulled her green béret firmly over her hair and, marching through the door, closed it. These quarters aboard the *Star*, she told herself, really meant nothing to her. She was through with all such Alaskan sentimentality.

She was moving down the passage when her glance was caught by the open door of the captain's suite opposite. Despite herself she delayed long enough to take a last look inside. There was the old-fashioned coal stove, the table with the fringed red cover under which she had played as a child, the wide alcove beyond with its comfortable large berth. All was as it had been when her Grandfather Nilsson was master of the *Star of Alaska* — even to the funny little basket carved from a coconut-shell that dangled from the metal bracket of the bedside lamp.

That basket was a souvenir of her grandfather's first command. A deep-water skipper he had been, of the old school, and he had brought the trinket from the Marquesas, moving it from ship to ship as long as he lived. He had kept matches in it; and ever since Dian could remember it had epitomized for her the romance of his youthful cruising in the South Seas. About it he had woven marvelous tales of foreign travel that had turned her adolescent readings to old books of voyagings — readings which had put an unfading luster on the world for her.

But in this hard moment of anger and farewell, she felt a wondering pity for that Alaska child who had found the dusty old shell so potent for glamour; and a faint scorn for the poor brown thing itself, swinging slightly with the movement of the ship.... Then a quick, poignant revulsion of feeling sent her running into the room. With remorseful

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tenderness she lifted the ugly little basket from its bracket and carefully slipped its handle of time-harshened string over her arm.

When she reached the dock, the *Fort Tongass* was gone. To her relief the canning crew also had vanished; dispersed to their own quarters, she judged, from the occasional shouts and sounds of argument that came from the China-House.

She hastened along the wharf toward the *Golden Hind*, her head bent against the salt wind that tore at her open jacket and kept the coconut basket bobbing on her arm. The shrubbery along the shore, all bending one way, gave the impression of fleeing movement. Back of her the cordage of the moored *Star* slapped impatiently against the spars, and the yardarms yearned under the enticements of the wild fresh breeze.

The sounds touched Dian with loneliness.

She was nearing the place where her cruiser was tied to the wharf when she saw Jim Kemerlee hurrying toward her. There was a look of concern on his face.

He called to her with quick incredulity: 'Dian! Your Indian boy says you're going to Ketchikan immediately. Surely he's mistaken?'

Dian gave him a studied look of insolence and walked on without answering.

He followed at her side. 'This is no weather for any small craft to go out in.' He indicated the grey-green inlet scored with flying spume and the dark clouds raking the tops of the lowest hills. 'From the way the glass is falling, there's a devil of a blow coming up.'

Still ignoring him, Dian reached the mooring of the *Golden Hind*. She was preparing to step down to the deck when he placed himself in her way. 'Dian... look here,' he said reasoningly. 'I can't let you go out alone in this weather. If you must go to Ketchikan this afternoon, I'll

send the *Thlinget Chief* in with you the moment she gets in from the traps.'

Dian leaned back against the wind, her grey eyes surveying him coolly from under the slant of her béret. 'You mind your own business,' she said evenly, 'and I'll attend to mine.' She stepped to one side and slipped the bowline of the *Golden Hind* from a piling.

'Your safety is my business,' he declared firmly, his hand going out toward the line. 'I won't allow you to ——'

Words and action were cut short by a shriek from the China-House. Man and girl turned to look. A babble of excited voices rose, and the next instant a young Filipino burst through the mess-house door. He scurried down the slope to the dock and came running toward Dian and Jim. His face was the color of putty; his black eyes wide with alarm.

'Boss! Come quick!' he panted. 'That Primo, he's jealous. He's try stabbing Augustine with his sliming-knife!'

Kemerlee turned quickly to Dian. 'Please wait.' There was a note of pleading in his voice. 'As a special favor I ask it, Dian. I'll be back just as soon as I can.'

She watched his retreating figure until he disappeared between two long cannery buildings. For a moment she considered the knifing fray; then shrugged. Such things had always been a part of cannery summers; always would be. The skilled nurse her father provided would look out for Augustine.

But Kemerlee! He had dared ask her to do something as a special favor to him! He had forbidden her to go out in her own cruiser! With a quick gesture she tossed the line aboard the *Golden Hind* and leaped after it to the deck.

Five minutes later, she stood behind the wheel in the pilot-house speeding out across the inlet on the course to Ketchikan. The shame and humiliation of the scene with

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Red Skain was overlaid now by an angry defiance of Jim Kemerlee that flowed like a warm current through her veins. It energized her and in some odd way exalted her so that she was not only indifferent to the physical dangers she might encounter on her fifty-mile trip to town, but she was actually looking forward to pitting her strength against the elements — or anything else that might offer.

CHAPTER EIGHT

I

WHEN Dian got away from the protection afforded by the cannery docks, the *Golden Hind* began to dip and rise and stagger under the slapping impact of chop seas that flung spindrift across the pilot-house windows. Clouds pouring between gaps in the shrouded hills scudded low above the trees along the shore. The stiffening breeze tore off the tops of whitecaps and carried them streaming in its wake. Gulls flew over hastily, crying in thin, high voices: *Be — waaaare! Be — waaaare!* And far down the inlet fish-boats were speeding to shelter.

When she was five miles out, it began to rain — wide-spaced marble-sized pellets at first, that hit the heaving brine with such force that they bounced back like miniature geysers. Then a deluge struck with the hiss of fine gravel against the windows and cascaded down the glass in a watery-green blur.

Dian brought her mind to bear on the situation confronting her. It had been over two years since she had handled a motor boat in a sea. At any other time she would have turned back to the cannery, but now, in the recklessness begotten of anger and humiliation, she cast caution aside. Denying her better judgment she determined to go through, no matter what happened.

She took an old logbook from the shelf above the chart roll and by its aid commenced to steer a semi-compass course. The cruiser lunged ahead.

When she realized she had instinctively accommodated the momentum of her craft to the buffetings of the rising sea, a thrill ran through her. She had not forgotten! She began to feel strong, adequate to any occasion; and pre-

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sently she was aware of nothing but her wild satisfaction in sending the *Golden Hind* head-on into the long-running swells she encountered farther out. The steady vibration of her engine was a guarantee of power. It was intoxicating, glorious to sway with the roll of the boat, to feel the wheel under her hands, and to know that hers was the intelligence that directed the leaping, pulsing hull through wave and rain. She threw up her chin and laughed as the *Golden Hind* dipped her nose and rose again, sending spray flying.

After a while the seas grew heavier. Though little was visible through the welter, she knew she was crossing one of the openings between islands where the swell of the North Pacific swept in unhindered. She began quartering the oncoming rollers, her narrowed eyes alert for those rampant higher waves which at intervals came rushing at her out of the wall of rain. She knew a fierce pleasure in maneuvering the cruiser over such combers — swinging its bow to meet them diagonally, holding steady while the *Golden Hind* was lifted up, up, up to the foaming crest, then easing it down the blue-green slope until she was back on her course with the giant billow gone under on its eager, shoreward run.

Now and then the downpour, blown on gusts of a born-ing gale, thinned so that she could discern a white line of surf at the base of dim headlands, landmarks which gave her her position. When she had covered half the way to Ketchikan, her course changed so that she had to run before the wind and sea. From behind, now, swift rollers pursued her, their rearing tops laced with flying spray. She realized that incautious steering, a moment's miscalculation in holding the cruiser stern-on, and the boat would turn turtle in a flash. Her heartbeats quickened at the danger. For a time it took all her skill to keep the *Golden Hind* from broaching.

With the passing of every mile the storm increased. Heavy rain-clouds, darkening the afternoon, were bringing on an early dusk. But, Dian assured herself, when she again got behind the larger islands where the water was sheltered, she could speed up her engine and still make Ketchikan before nightfall.

As she became more at home in the roar and lash of the southeaster, her thoughts returned to the cannery and Jim Kemerlee. So the man imagined he was her guardian, her mentor! Thought he could keep her ashore because of a little breeze! She'd show him how independent she was. How little his commands counted in her life. She'd —

The *Golden Hind* suddenly started racing down the slope of a wave and again she had to bring all her skill and attention to her handling to keep the boat from sheering. Then, just as it began to rise safely on the next billow, she sensed with the peculiar wariness of those who know engines a hesitancy in the vibration of the machinery under her. A premonitory chill went through her. She strained every faculty, listening, feeling.

Like a blow came recollection: in her anger at Jim Kemerlee she had rushed away from the cannery without getting the tank filled! She was running out of gasoline!

Her heart began to beat heavily as she scanned the rolling expanse between her and the coast-line that leaped and sank off the starboard bow.... A dead engine... night... and the *Golden Hind* helpless in the path of the onshore gale! Her limbs turned to water and for a moment her thoughts swam in panic. Then, 'God!' she said prayerfully. 'God!' And she shook off the thought of ultimate disaster to concentrate on immediate action.

Her observations convinced her she was perhaps five miles off the entrance of Green Waters, a small salt-water lake connected with the bay by a quarter-mile of channel

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little wider than a ditch. This channel, called the Roar Hole by local Indians, was spiked with rocks and navigable only at high tide; at the ebb it was nearly dry. And at all other times the tide roared either in or out of it with the boiling swiftness of a millrace.

Dian caught up the tide-table. Steadying the *Hind* with one hand, she turned the pages of the book with the other until she found what she wanted. Thank Heaven, the tide was coming in and nearly full! Now, if only the gas would hold out until she might make the blessed sanctuary of Green Waters!

With her heart in her throat and every sense alert to catch the first indication of a failing engine, she put the wheel over and headed the lunging cruiser for the land.

The shore-line grew nearer, the pitching of the little craft less violent. Presently the crash of surf sounded through the shrilling of the wind. When she could see the timbered hills greying through the rain, she lowered the pilot-house window and, despite stinging blasts that made her cheeks tingle and her eyes smart, began searching for the opening that led to Green Waters.

Would she remember how to find it — after two years?

Through the flying scud details began to loom vaguely — wet grey boulders and drift logs piled above the high-tide line. Streaming spruce and hemlocks bowing and swaying under the wind... And finally the place she was looking for, the rock-guarded portal of the Roar Hole! Five minutes more and she'd be inside, she was thinking thankfully, when the engine sputtered... stopped... then throbbed on again unsteadily.

Dian, body and soul, strained with a desperate urge to help the *Golden Hind* forward. The boat staggered gallantly... lost headway... And just as she swung it in toward the narrow opening, the engine gave a last faint gulp and went dead.

She held her breath until she saw that wind and wave were behind her, reënforcing the strong current setting into the opening. She still had steerageway. 'Oh, go on, baby!' In a low, tense voice she began encouraging the cruiser as if it were human. 'One more spurt, little fellow!... T-h-a-t-'s fine! Keep going!... Oh, *keep going!*... Ah-h-h.'

The last was a gasp of relief as the *Golden Hind* slipped into the entrance of the Roar Hole and went gliding on through the channel scarcely thirty feet wide. The ocean-green current rushed the boat along between banks lined with storm-beaten cedars. The lashing branches nearly swept the pilot-house as Dian, steering vigilantly, veered her craft to avoid black projecting rocks in her course.

Halfway through, she remembered that once she was inside the tidal lake, she would be a prisoner until the water was high again for her to come out — twelve hours. But the blow would be over then and she could shove the dinghy off the stern deck and row out to intercept a passing seiner who would give her enough gasoline to take her in to Ketchikan. She'd still have plenty of time to get her steamer.

As she settled this problem, the *Golden Hind* suddenly debouched into Green Waters. Though sheets of rain obscured the encircling shores, she could make out the islet on the far side where, she remembered, there was good anchorage. Aided by the current she carefully worked the cruiser forward.

A few minutes later she slipped into her oilskins, tied a sou'wester under her chin, and, stepping out onto the deck, ran up to the bow. By tugging and prying, she got two light anchors over the side. When the second one dropped, the *Golden Hind* rode with scarcely a movement.

Dian straightened against the wind that flapped her

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slicker and sent silver rills flying from her. 'G-o-s-h!' she breathed in relief. Let night come on now! 'And blow the top of your head off, Æolus, my lad!' She challenged the wind god with a fling of her dripping arm. Then, discovering that she was a little chilled and more than a little hungry, she made her way aft through the pilot-house to the galley.

Though the force of the southeaster was broken in Green Waters, she could hear the steady roar of it high overhead, and from the dimmed shore came exultant voices of forest trees tossing their rain-soaked branches. All the while she was busying herself in the galley taking off her oilskins, making a fire in the tiny coal range, putting the kettle on to boil, she kept going to the portholes to peer out.

Green Waters was a place of happy memories. During her mother's lifetime the Turlon family had often run down for trout-fishing in adjacent streams and picnicking on the Peer Gynt islet off which her cruiser was now anchored. Every evidence of the tempest outside but emphasized the familiar security of her surroundings.

Though it was not yet dark, she turned on all the lights. As she was setting and winding the alarm clock so that she should not oversleep and miss the morning tide, her eyes passed approvingly over the cheerful, ivory-painted galley with its glowing old-fashioned stove, shelf of books, cushioned locker-lids that served as seats, and the framed old print of Sir Francis Drake's *Golden Hind* under full sail. The sleeping-quarters were separated from the galley by the raised pilot-house. Dian ascended three steps, crossed the narrow wheelhouse floor, and, drawing aside the heavy portière that served as a door to the forward cabin, stepped down between two berths there, one on either side. She hung the clock on a hook below a porthole. While she remade her bed with fresh linen, she hummed contentedly. From the galley came the singing of the tea-kettle and the

warmth of the fire filling the whole boat with homelike comfort.

'Now for a bite of supper,' she thought as she finished her preparations for the night.

On the way back to the galley she lingered in the wheel-house. With wilderness caution her gaze swept the circle of the lake growing dim in the storm-light of late afternoon.

Smoke from the galley went whipping past the window on the curve of the gale. A floating log caught her attention. Despite a contrary wind, it was riding steadily toward the Roar Hole, evidence that the tide had already turned. A short while and the Roar Hole would be impassable; already it must be getting dangerous. Dian shivered and felt a surge of thankfulness that she had made her snug anchorage in the nick of time.

She was about to step down into the galley again when she glimpsed something that sent her darting back to press her face against the glass. Could that be a boat coming through the passage at this unfavorable stage of the tide? A sudden drift of rain obscured her vision. But a second later she saw it again, indistinct, but undeniably real. Some foolhardy launchman was desperately bucking the tide and beating in through the driving rain.

Remembering tales of rum-runners — crews crazy drunk abducting Indian girls and bringing them to hidden coves like this — Dian knew a moment of keen apprehension. Here she was shut off from the world for twelve hours. No one knew where she had gone. What if —

A lull between 'woolies' permitted a better view of the approaching craft. It was an open-cockpit cruiser, and it was heading for her anchorage. She could hear the exhaust of the engine now. Behind the wheel, exposed to the full fury of the elements, sat a single figure, bareheaded, drenched. He brought his boat about, came up in the lee of the *Golden Hind*, and laid it alongside.

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Dian threw open the pilot-house door to greet the newcomer. 'Oh!' she said scornfully. 'So it's you!'

Angry blue eyes appraised her from under dripping black hair.

'Yes! It's me!' retorted Jim Kemerlee, grim and ungrammatical. 'Whom were you expecting?'

He rose, flung a pair of rope fenders between his boat and the *Hind*, and without further words proceeded to make fast fore and aft to Dian's craft. The moment the two cruisers were riding side by side, he stood up in his own cockpit and, to Dian's indignant surprise, began to address her in pungent, anger-clipped sentences. There were not eight feet between them, but the wind snatched strings of words off his lips. She heard enough, however: What in blazes!... fool girl starting out in such a storm alone!... Hadn't he enough trouble at the cannery now without having to drop everything and play nursemaid to a thoughtless —

'Look here!' Dian's voice cut spiritedly through the stridor of wind and water. 'Are you never going to mind your own business? How dared you follow me! Who asked you to play nursemaid to me? I'm no cheechako that I need a man to run my boat in a sea. The Turlons are capable of taking care of themselves anywhere, under any circumstances. Talk of fools — I suppose you consider it the height of wisdom to start out in a southeaster in that' — she pointed a derisive finger at the *River Mist* — 'in that puny, sputtering peanut-shell —'

'Sputtering peanut-shell!' Outraged, he leaped to the defense of his craft. 'Good Lord, you couldn't recognize a real boat if you saw one. There isn't another small cruiser on the coast that could have followed your wallowing tub through that sea this afternoon!' And then, with ridiculous and childish irrelevance, the two plunged into a furious quarrel as to their personal seamanship and the seaworthy qualities of their respective craft.

Finally Dian, stinging under a scoring bit of sarcasm from her opponent, put an end to the senseless performance by leaning from the pilot-house door and crying, 'Very well! Since you're so enamoured of your cruiser, you may stay in it until you ask for shelter aboard my boat!' She turned her back, leaving the wheelhouse door open, and ran down the steps into the warm galley.

The kettle had boiled dry. She refilled it, stirred up the fire in the tiny range, and with a great show of concentration prepared to get supper. But her mind was elsewhere. Why was it, she asked herself, that this man had such power to infuriate her, to disturb her in so many different ways? She paused, frying-pan in hand, and rising on her toes glared out through the wheelhouse door at the tempest-lashed figure sitting in the cockpit of the *River Mist*.

He should call her a fool, she thought wrathfully, when obviously he had rushed off in such a hurry he had forgotten even his sou'wester, to say nothing of a slicker.... Well, let him stay there now and reap the result of his officiousness. A few more minutes in the battering gale and he'd be mighty glad to come aboard the staunch little *Golden Hind* he had maligned with the odious word 'tub.'

Dian withdrew her frowning gaze from the object of her wrath and began to search the food-locker. She drew out a package of sliced bacon, started to strip the waxed paper from it, stopped when half-done, and took another peep out the door. There the man sat, straight as a totem pole and as unwincing, while rain-squalls belabored his bare head and sweated body. To all appearances he was totally unaware of the lighted comfort of the *Golden Hind*.

She forced herself to resume her cooking. As she brought forth eggs, crackers, and a can of coffee, she noted that dusk was coming fast. She could feel the cruiser's slight staggerings, its tuggings at the anchor. The wind was still rising.... Yet the perverse creature could stay out there,

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scorning the shelter so near him! Why didn't he act human? Show some sign of discomfort?

Dian took up an egg to break it into a dish — and put it down again intact. 'Stubborn thing!' she muttered under her breath. 'I'll show you how little you affect me!'

With a vigorous hand she wound up the portable phonograph on its shelf. Carefully selecting a record she slipped it on the disk and during the preliminary soundless spinning craned her neck to note the effect when the music should reach the ears of the storm-trampled Kemerlee.

At the moment he was crouching, back to the wind, trying to light a cigarette. His lighter ignited under his curved hand. He applied it. But at that instant a terrific gust of scooped-up brine inundated the *River Mist*. He straightened up, soaked, shredded tobacco blowing from him, just as the phonograph burst out joyously: '*Oh, it ain't goin' to rain no mo!*'

Dian hunched her shoulders and pressed her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing. She had never seen anything wetter or more dignified.

But apparently the man was deaf.

This attitude was a further challenge. She began to sing to the phonograph accompaniment, hoping her voice was carrying to him above the roar of the southeaster. When one record came to an end she put on another. She was glad she had left the pilot-house door open. He must be as hungry as he was wet and — wait till the aroma of brewing coffee, frying bacon and eggs, toasted crackers and butter, began floating out to him! If he could resist that ——!

As she was letting down the folding table between the two locker-seats in the galley, she paused, listening. An alien sound came on the wind: a deep, continuous bellow; the protest of the heavy tide setting out through the Roar Hole against the gale.

It was nearly dark now. Her meal was cooked... It was

overcooked... And still the obstinate creature sat out there in the weather. Was he never going to ask for shelter?

Dian found her anger waning — giving place to a feeling she couldn't quite define.... It prompted her to shut off the music before she sat down to the narrow table spread with her waiting supper. She poured a cup of hot coffee for which she had been longing this past hour, but after one swallow set it down again....

Once more she rose and peered out. The light from the pilot-house shafting through rain-slanted dusk showed him sitting straight and stern behind his dripping wheel. If just once he would look her way... If —

She turned back to the table and took up a toasted cracker.... Thoughts faintly tinged with contrition began to scurry through her mind: She knew what had happened. He had felt responsible for her and had followed her in that small cruiser because it was the fastest thing at the cannery.... But why, since he was so disgusted with her, didn't he discharge his responsibility by sending one of his men? ... After all, she had been a bit foolish dashing off that way and forgetting to fill the gas tank.... Thank Heaven, he didn't know yet that she was out of gas!... His trip had been a dangerous one. To come safely through that sea this afternoon he must have handled her prettily — that keen, racing little *River Mist*.

For a moment she envisaged him crouched over the steering-wheel, wet black hair blown back from his face, eyes half-closed against the storm through which he grimly rode the combers trying to keep the *Golden Hind* in sight.... Down in the States she never saw men coping with natural dangers — wind, seas, blinding tempests. Could that be why they of the South lacked the allure she found in —

She jerked away from this unfinished thought to find herself sitting with the untasted cracker in her hand. She started to take a bite and remembered, for no reason at all,

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how the former Sunny Cove superintendent had fallen off a trap and contracted double pneumonia a few weeks ago... a big, healthy fellow, too... Against the starboard port-holes the continuous fury of rain-squalls slapped this thought home to her.

Shivering with a vicarious chill, Dian suddenly shoved her untouched plate from her and sat staring at it with eyes blind to food. What if Jim were to get pneumonia from this exposure she had forced him to endure?... The storm was certainly getting worse... Darn him! Could it be possible he didn't intend to come aboard?

Pneumonia... The strongest men in Alaska succumbed to it. She had a swift, vivid vision of a hospital bed, Jim Kemerlee's dark head on the pillow, his eyes closed, his face pale and gaunt with suffering... A flood of contrition and apprehension overwhelmed her. She sprang to her feet, made a dash for the pilot-house, and stuck her head out of the door.

'For Heaven's sake!' she shouted, cupping her mouth with her hands and leaning down toward the wet figure in the boat below, 'aren't you ever coming in out of this storm?'

He deigned her a look of raging politeness, water running off chin and nose, and retorted: 'I'm quite comfortable th ——' The word was lost in a deluge of salt water caught up by a wind-twister that flung it, not only over him, but over Dian as well.

The two emerged gasping, their eyes wildly seeking each other in the howling dusk. For a moment they stared in comic surprise. Then, simultaneously, they burst out laughing.

'Oh, come along!' Impulsively Dian beckoned him with both arms. 'Let's declare a truce till this devilish weather is over.' She flashed him a drenched *gamin* smile. 'I hereby invite you to come aboard and join me at supper, sir. Will you?'

'I'll tell the world I will!' he yelled joyously, preparing to climb out of the flooded cockpit.

He drew himself up to the deck of the *Golden Hind* and joined her in the warm pilot-house. Dian closed the door on the wild night and turned to face him.

He was standing, water running off him in streams, while both hands smoothed the wet black hair back from his forehead. As he dropped his arms he gave a tremendous sigh of relief, looked down at her, and grinned.

'So it's a truce, Dian — while the storm lasts?'

She nodded. 'And the word *fish* is absolutely taboo — while the storm lasts!'

She tried to make her voice very gay because she was noticing that despite his height there was a scrubbed small-boy look in his face. He was shivering and trying not to. There was a faint quiver in his chin that betokened a controlled chattering of teeth. She had kept him out there until he was wet to the skin, chilled to the bone. What if he should get sick — and die?

She was seized with a very passion of self-reproach that was mingled with an odd tenderness. But she hid her feelings under a casual, laughing manner and directed him to the forward cabin where Ivor kept some old clothes in a locker.

'A piping hot supper will be served in the dining-salon in exactly ten minutes!' she called after him.

And hurrying down into the galley she set about preparing the best meal she could contrive from the limited larder on the *Golden Hind*.

Half an hour later, they were sitting on opposite sides of the narrow table, talking and smoking comfortably over their coffee.

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After her wetting Dian had slipped into a pale-green tennis frock she kept aboard for such emergencies. The color turned her eyes to sea-green, brought out the delicate ivory of her complexion and the blondness of the thick hair that waved loose on her shoulders. There was a happy, rapt expression on her face, a soft brilliance in her gaze, that made her beautiful tonight.

'How congenial we are,' she marveled to herself as she folded one hand over the other, and rested her chin on them to look across at her companion.

Kemerlee had found a pair of Ivor's light corduroy trousers and a clean white soft shirt that was ragged enough to give him the look of a tatterdemalion hero in an opera. Every time he moved the thin garment, slightly too tight, showed the ripple of his muscles beneath. The sleeves were torn off at the elbow, and one, split to the shoulder, fell away from the upper part of his arm just where the flying gull was tattooed. Pale-blue against his fine white skin, it fascinated Dian. She, who was singularly fastidious about physical contacts, felt an impulse to reach out and touch her finger to his smooth shoulder. She had a pleasing appreciation of him — his damp black hair above the turned-up open collar that bared his throat; his lean wide shoulders tapering to his waist; his hands, when he lighted a cigarette, slender and virile, and as well-formed as Tyler's.

Tonight he seemed free from responsibilities, and younger. As their talk played with ideas and epigrams, anecdotes and the spice of local scandal, his radiant smile flashed out continually, transforming his habitual expression of remoteness into one of warming friendliness.

She was surprised at the ease with which they both fell into the rôle of friends. It was as if the storm had washed away all their antagonism. She wondered if she were not a bit weak-minded because she had difficulty recalling her reasons for anger and resentment. She tried occasionally

to remember he was her father's enemy — or was he? Somehow, except in moments of rage, she had never quite believed that. There was a subtle, delicious excitement in living up to the truce she herself had suggested. She made up her mind to savor every moment of it, because tomorrow —

Tomorrow she'd be on her way South, leaving him behind with all other Alaskan things.

Though she had felt no fear at the prospect of spending a stormy night alone at Green Waters, his presence now brought her a new and curious sense of protection; a glamour that heightened her perception of familiar things. All the time they were making gay talk at supper, she was aware, with the fresh zest of an adventure shared, of the southeaster raging over their snug anchorage.

The *Golden Hind* quivered under intermittent thumpings of the smaller cruiser alongside. The gale rushing over the mountains brought the susurrus of tossing forests, the muted thunder of breakers pealing against the cliffs of outer islands. There was the continuous slap and gurgle of tide-rips against the thin hull of the *Hind*, the roar of wind up the stovepipe of the tiny range where the singing kettle steamed and wobbled.

The stridor of the elements enhanced the coziness of the galley; the feeling of well-being that followed a hot meal. They laughed together, and agreed that one of the most satisfying things in life was getting wet to the skin and experiencing the felicitous ease that came from the change into dry clothes.

Dian found herself noting and liking mannerisms he had: when telling her of that which pleased him — an experience in the woods, or something he had read — he lowered his voice, lifted his shoulders with an inimitable air of embracing her with his confidence, and his deep eyes glowed into hers, making his abstract statements somehow charmingly personal.

It occurred to her presently that this was the first time she had ever really talked socially with Jim Kemerlee. Heretofore they'd had encounters instead of conversations. She had at her tongue's end the usual patter of current events and the small-talk of her set: the newest dancing-place in San Francisco, the best golf course, the latest movie star, the smartest new novel; but in discussing things, even with Alan, she had never known the stimulating quality of companionship she now found in sharing ideas with this Alaskan.

Perhaps, she thought in loyalty to Alan, this was due to the subjects she and Jim happened upon — subjects in which Alan took no interest. For it began when Jim looked up and saw Grandfather Nilsson's little coconut basket swinging from the end of the bookshelf. Dian's explanation of the shell's magic started them speaking of foreign lands and books of travel. Not the clever, publicity-conscious accounts of today's adventurers, but old books that took them journeying down the centuries from Marco Polo to Pierre Loti.

"I, too, shall see the moon rise over the ruins of Angkor!" quoted Dian, glowing with the wonder of finding a man, a modern young man, who knew and cared for such readings. 'Do you recall how Loti, when a very little boy, made that resolve one night after listening to his father's distinguished guest tell of travels in Cambodia?'

He did, in greater detail, even, than Dian. He also lifted a humorously appreciative glance to the framed print of Drake's high-sterned, cannon-belted *Golden Hind*. And while the wild Alaskan night keened about the namesake of that Elizabethan privateer, they chuckled over the naïve incongruities of the English Drake. They shared their delight in the magnificent plunderer of Spanish treasure who led in prayer before each raid; who dined off golden dishes with his pirate cadets of royal blood; who pleased in the

dreamy music of violins while his galleon pursued its looting way along the Spanish Main.

Dian took from the shelf a volume of Sir John de Mandeville's travels in the fourteenth century, and between them they cleared a place on the table and spread it open at an ancient map of Asia. The galley light fell on the cheerful reds and yellows of the quaint chart, the heads of the four winds blowing from prodigiously puffed cheeks in the corners; the bearded Neptune, trident in hand, rising from the bright blue sea.

With heads close and forefingers pointing out the sketches of serpents, beasts, and devils that were the only guiding details on the land areas, they made a game of reading aloud the information beneath the figures.

Jim began in a deep voice of burlesqued gravity:

'Here grow spices.

'Here dwell the dog-headed folk.

'Here is the Perilous Vale that is full of Devils.

'Here are snails so large that several people can get into a single shell.'

'Now it's my turn,' interrupted Dian eagerly, shifting the map slightly toward her side of the table. She quirked her brows and following her finger rolled the words on her tongue:

'Here the wicked nations of Gog and Magog are walled up.

'Here live Enchanters.

'Here is the Fountain of Youth, and men worship oxen.'

'Listen, I love this one ——

'Here is Ind, where diamonds grow and where are eels thirty feet long. The people are green and yellow.

'De — licious!' She looked up to find him watching her with quiet delight. 'What a world they lived in! Imagine setting forth with such a map for guidance!'

Then he told her it was de Mandeville's predecessor

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Marco Polo, who really started him off looking for 'far Cathay and the Isles of Spicery.' 'I was about Ivor's age, and brimming over with romance which I took particular pains to hide,' he explained. 'So I scorned Dad's offer of a ticket round the world one vacation and got myself a nice job aboard an old-fashioned tramp freighter in Seattle. A job as stoker!' he laughed.

'Good for you!' Dian widened her eyes in amused approval.

'Well, I didn't think so when we got about half a day from port. You see, though I was husky for my age, I'd never done any manual labor. The first shift, when I found myself down in the bottom of the ship stripped to the waist shoveling coal into a roaring red maw that singed the hair off my head — well — I thought I'd rather die than keep on with the job.'

'What's it like — being a stoker?'

He considered a moment. 'It's bend, lift, swing; bend, lift, and swing for four endless hours in an inferno of flame-lighted darkness and heat. Sweat pouring off you till you think you're melting away; arms and back feeling as if a million fiends are piercing you with red-hot wires. Head swimming with weakness. But it was the awful heat that got me. In order to keep going, I had to think of the clean coolness of snow and the way the wind feels blowing off a glacier. I thought if I could only live till I got up out of the stokehole, I'd wireless Dad to free me from my bondage.'

'And did you?'

He shook his head. 'Somehow, I couldn't get up enough nerve. I kept plugging through my shifts and the ship kept going southward. I thought the stokehole hot in the northern latitudes; but when we reached the tropics, it was just plain hell. I couldn't even think. I was a machine — a clod, shoveling in for fifteen minutes, then slumping on a stool to rest, my eyes on the steam indicator. Then up

again to shovel for another fifteen minutes. Off shift I was dead to the world in sleep. I had but one idea: I was going to jump the ship at Singapore, wire Dad, and go home as a passenger.'

His voice sank to its most engaging register: 'I'll always remember the evening we steamed slowly into Singapore Harbor. I was off shift and for the first time felt rested enough to be on deck. It was a beautiful evening, full of strange light that gave an indefinable significance to everything. The water was a sort of twilight green. The sky overhead was pale, pellucid green with a silver sickle moon hanging in it, and it shaded down all round to clear, flamingo red. Against the red lay the coast of Sumatra — a long black smudge. There was a foreignness, a quality of the East about it all, but because it was so darned beautiful, somehow I didn't feel like a stranger there. I felt clean, and light, part of the wide earth, the sky, the sea.'

He paused, and his blue eyes looked across the world. Then he smiled at Dian. 'Now, what do you suppose there was about that to make me stick to my job in the stoke-hole? I don't know. But I did stick. And by the time I got back to Seattle, my four-hour shifts were child's play for me. I was strong, and a seasoned adventurer in half a hundred foreign ports. See' — he flexed his right arm — 'this one's developed more than the other because the propelling force on a coal shovel comes from the right.... That flying gull? Oh, I got that in Shanghai — by some miracle resisting the enticements of the old Chinese tattooer who decorated the other boys with bulbous-limbed ladies in tights, and eagles, half life-size, in red and blue attitudes of rage.'

Dian felt very much at home with him by the time they had finished clearing the table and folding it back against the wall. When Jim, with an apron about him, was washing the dishes and she was wiping them, she quoted from a

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favorite poem: "These I have loved: White plates and cups, clean gleaming, ringed with blue lines." And she was surprised to find he had a taste for certain modern poetry — Lindsay's 'Johnny Appleseed'; Benét's 'John Brown's Body'; Sandburg's 'Good Morning, America' — anything that depicted the forward movement of the nation.

When the talk came back nearer home, she told him how the Turlons had always picnicked at Green Waters on the tiny Peer Gynt island she herself had named when she was a small girl. 'I used to think I'd have a little cabin there one day,' she finished.

'Splendid idea, Dian! We'd be neighbors then, for I've taken up a strip of land along the shore — I'll show you when it gets daylight. I'm coming down here this fall when the fishing season's over to cut enough spruce logs to build myself a hunting lodge — a big one.'

'You mean to say you're going to live in Alaska summer and winter too?'

'Certainly! I hope, Dian, you're not one of those who consider Alaska merely as a summer fishing ground, or a vacation playground. Why, it's a homeland all the year round!' His face lighted with a sudden, rare sincerity. 'There isn't a place in the world that offers greater opportunities to its people.'

He told her he was essentially a fishman, and that the dream of his life was to build and operate a cannery according to plans of his own. But that while he was working toward that end, he was taking advantage of other opportunities. And at her expression of interest he outlined two small ventures he had launched during the past winter: a company which would put up fancy and pickled fish, the kind the Scandinavians made a specialty of; and another that was to exploit Alaska spruce for the particular purposes of the dairyman, since it was the only wood known that did not taint the produce stored in it. 'You can see,'

he concluded earnestly, 'how such industries, unlike our canneries, will employ Alaskan labor all the year round. That will make for a permanent population and assure the future of the country.'

Through all his plans Dian felt this concern for the ultimate good of Alaska. His eyes as he talked had a look of far vision that saw through her and past her into the future. No one else in the North that she knew had this altruistic view. Even her father was here because of immediate gain. True, he had built a home in Ketchikan, but Dian suspected that he had done it so that he might better keep an eye on his fellow fishermen. For the first time she realized that Eagle Turlon and his contemporaries in the packing industry did, indeed, take their summer profit annually and return to the States each autumn leaving little of it behind them. They felt slight responsibility, if any, for the future of the land whose resources had made them rich. Yet, they proudly called themselves pioneers.

'And they *are* pioneers!' declared Dian stoutly, when, a few minutes later, she took up this question with Jim. 'Your dad and mine and all the rest!'

'I'll say they are!' he agreed heartily when she was expecting an argument. 'God love them! They blazed an industrial trail in this new land. It took courage, daring, vision. Now it's up to their sons — to us fellows who are one generation removed from the pioneer — to establish and maintain the integrity and dignity of that industry they founded. It's — But good Heavens!' he broke off, 'I'm not going to bore you with my chamber-of-commerce spoutings.' He grinned at her as if a bit abashed at the turn he had given the conversation. 'But I would like to tell you about my Green Waters lodge, Dian.'

He did start to tell her about it — a wide, woodsy place for comfort and relaxation. 'When I want to get away from the world,' he added. 'But wait. I'll show you

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the blue-prints, Dian, when we get back to Sunny Cove.'

Dian, putting away the dishes, paused to glance at him. It was on the tip of her tongue to say she was not going back to Sunny Cove, but his face wore such a happy, eager expression that she dissembled: 'I'd love to see them.' She would tell him of her departure later in the evening. 'I've always wanted to live in a log cabin.' As she spoke, she realized, with an unaccountable pang of nostalgia, that as Alan's wife she would never live in an Alaskan log cabin... That she would never see the hunting lodge Jim Kemerlee would build at Green Waters.

While she placed the cups carefully on their hooks in the locker, her imagination raced into the future, and she visualized Jim's place as it would be on a gold-and-lilac day of autumn — the log lodge, low and wide with a look of home, sprawling under hemlocks above the shore; sundown sky and lines of geese winging south filling the air with high, dim farewells... the door, open and broad, framing part of the living-room where a spruce-cone fire burned in the grate... silver notes of a hidden piano... and a voice singing — a woman's voice.

With instant, illogical resentment she brushed the unseen woman from the picture and reset the log house on a white day of January: chimney smoke climbing above the green of the forest, sun on snow and the diamond sparkle of frost crystals all around. Serenity, the serenity that comes from knowing the world cannot find or disturb you.... Out on the veranda of her vision came Jim Kemerlee, sweated in white, snowshoes under his arm. And following him, similarly equipped for out-of-door delights, a laughing woman... and a little boy.

'No!' Unwittingly Dian spoke aloud and slammed the locker door in protest against the thing she herself had evoked.

Jim, divesting himself of the apron, swung quickly to

look at her. 'What's happened, Dian?' There was concern in his voice. 'Hurt your hand?'

But she stood now with no thought of answering, her face lifted to his, noting, absurdly, the tiny hollow above the bow of his upper lip, while her thoughts went on swiftly, stormily behind her eyes: 'She'll marry you — that other woman. Have your sons. And I'll be gone from here — without ever touching your hand — without —' She was overcome with a sudden passionate envy, a sense of loss that turned her heart to tears.

Then she realized that she was very close to him in the little galley; that she was still looking up at him, and that something elemental was happening to them both. His eyes were on hers, darkly luminous, soft, ardent, a look that embraced her, covered her, sent a mad, sweet pang contracting her whole being. She was poignantly aware of him physically: the pulse in his bare, fine-textured throat, the beat of his heart quickening under his thin white shirt. The narrow space between them throbbed with a powerful, magnetic essence that dissolved her body, dissolved her will, sent every atom of her pouring toward him. In an abandonment of surrender she felt herself going — then something — was it herself, or Jim? — broke the spell. She wrenched her glance from his and looked away.

He remained upright, tense, his arms rigid at his sides. The knuckles of his closed hands showed white.

For a moment Dian could not stir because of a sense of weakness in every limb; then she drew a long breath and brushed the hair back from her forehead. Her mind groped hastily, trying to pick up the lost thread of their conversation. It eluded her. She was conscious only that the atmosphere between them was alive with leashed impulses for which she had no words. She felt a numbing silence settling on them both.

In vague embarrassment they drew apart as far as the

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small quarters would permit. They avoided looking directly at each other. He put coal in the stove and afterward carefully brushed non-existent dust from the top. She opened the wall-locker again and with hasty fingers began rearranging the already neatly stacked dishes, meanwhile trying frantically to think of something clever to say; something light and inconsequential that would put them both at ease and bring back the delightful comradeship that had made the first part of the evening so stimulating.

Concurrently, it dawned on her that sometime during the past hour the rain and wind had ceased beating against the *Golden Hind*. The comparative stillness outside, once recognized, increased the potency of the silence in the galley. She kept commanding herself fiercely: 'Talk... Say something... Anything!' But processes of intellect were submerged. She was sensitized only to strange, new emotions. Yet silence so intense could not, must not last.

In desperation she stole a glance at him. He was standing motionless, his back to her, intent on a book open in his hands.

Dian knew a sinking, let-down feeling, and a quick sense of shame. She alone had been agitated while he, unconcerned, read a book! She ventured another glimpse to see what had claimed his attention at a tempestuous moment like this.

It was de Mandeville's travels. And he was holding the volume firmly — upside down.

Dian felt a swift, glad sense of relaxation. The surety that he had been affected, even as she, somehow restored her poise. When she closed the locker door, she was again mistress of herself and of the situation.

Leaning on tiptoe she peered through the glass of a port-hole and exclaimed in bright tones of discovery: 'I do believe it's stopped raining!'

'So it has!' An echo of her relief was in his voice. He

lifted his head listening, aware, apparently for the first time, that the sounds of the storm had ceased. He thrust de Mandeville back on the shelf and with exaggerated intentness regarded the watch strapped about his wrist. 'Let's see — it's eleven o'clock now. The tide won't be right for us to get out of here until six in the morning.'

'Ho hum!' With one finger Dian patted an admirably simulated yawn. 'Seven more hours to wait.'

He stepped up into the unlighted pilot-house and threw open the door to scan his cruiser lying alongside.

'I'm going to hop aboard the *River Mist*,' he said, looking back at her, 'and find out how the little fellow weathered the blow.'

3

After he had gone outside and closed the door, Dian stood abstractedly twisting the emerald on her finger. What a complex thing of changing moods this truce was proving to be!... She had not dreamed that the cool and always antagonistic superintendent of Sunny Cove could be such a companion — humorous, cheerful, whimsical.... She liked whimsical men. And they were so rare.... She would remember this night as long as she lived, she thought, looking up to note it on the wall calendar. It was the last day of July.

She roused herself and began putting the galley in order. As she arranged his wet clothes to dry behind the glowing stove, she was surprised to find it gave her pleasure to do this; a sweet, newly awakened sense of domesticity. Her contented humming sounded in the little room as she moved about her task, and, before she realized where her imagination was taking her, she was adventuring with him in the *Golden Hind* along the enchanting blue waterways of Alaska's islanded coast; was living golden days of sun and

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wind and crystal, forest-tanged air, seeking out Indian villages dreaming behind listening totems; exploring sequestered inlets; fishing virgin streams. There were serene anchorages in sunset coves with the two of them laughing over the preparation of dinner in the galley: venison, trout, wild red strawberries; and afterward, singing on the deck in the twilight all those quaint, home-made Northern songs they both —

Dian brought herself up with a frown of dismay, feeling her cheeks grow warm. What inconsistent fancies to come to a girl who, only a few hours ago, had dwelt with eager anticipation on enjoying with Alan the luxurious sophisticated Southern delights of Palm Springs!... With sudden intensity she applied herself to finishing up her work in the galley.

When it was done and still Jim remained outside, she went up into the wheelhouse and stood with her face pressed against the cool glass looking out into the night. The rain was over and the short-lived summer gale had died away to a breeze.

Light from the galley portholes dimly illumined the smaller craft where Jim, electric flash in hand, was moving about in the cockpit and running over the housing, doing those innumerable mysterious things men always find to do aboard a boat. He was slim, agile, very capable. The wind tossed his thick black hair and fluttered the tattered sleeves of his pale shirt. In his unconscious posturings against the darkness he made her think of the virile drawings of young adventurers she had seen in Rockwell Kent's books of voyagings.

Dian didn't know he was aware of her watching until he glanced up quickly and she saw his white smile and the swing of his lean shoulders as he raised a hand in gay recognition. She thought how comfortable, how much at ease she felt, now that their former practical relations were restored.

But as she continued to observe his activities, an instinct deep within warned her that there was not, even now, anything practical in their relations. There never had been from that morning, over a month ago, when she had seen him calmly appraising her from the pilot-house door of the *Who Cares*... From that moment everything had been against their friendship, yet from that moment he had possessed a devastating fascination for her. Tonight she could acknowledge it without danger to herself, because she was so soon to leave him.

She recalled their various encounters, his ability to disturb her, his insolence, his indifference, his arrogant manner of overriding her wishes at the cannery, their fierce quarrels. She had every cause to feel antagonistic toward him. But all the time she had been insisting to herself that she hated him for these things, she was aware underneath of something that was impelling her toward him. Something that welled up out of an inner depth in her was vitalized by a like impulse, vast and magical, that emanated from the North itself — from the green, life-giving ocean, the stirring, fecund rivers, the verdant, fruiting land. A force powerful and indecipherable against which she had fought continually lest she succumb to the delicious, fateful sense of helplessness that bade her yield to its overmastering tide.

But that was all over now. Tomorrow she was going South — to Alan... Perhaps it was just as well.

She put an end to introspection by opening the door and calling to tell Jim of the *Golden Hind's* lack of gasoline. He promised to transfer half his supply to the tank, and she went inside without having confessed that it was the desperate need of gas that had driven her into the shelter of Green Waters.

Presently, after he had made everything shipshape aboard both cruisers, he joined her in the pilot-house,

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bringing with him the cool purity of rain-cleared atmosphere. They stood together in the pleasant warmth coming up from the galley and looked out through the open door that gave on the night-enshrouded arc of Green Waters.

'The weather's clearing fast,' he noted. 'We'll have a grand day tomorrow.' Then for a little while speech died between them and a companionable musing took its place.

The ebon sweep of water outside shimmered with faint nocturnal gleams. The freshness of wet spruce and cedar wafted in. Encircling mountains rose in strong, beautiful silhouettes against the translucent darkness, and high above the peaks thinning clouds streamed across sky-spaces filled with bright stars. All about was a sense of the illimitable, beckoning vastness of Alaska lying beyond; a listening country, lovely, wild, untouched — and waiting. It made Dian conscious of herself and of the tall man by her side: They were both of this country — North-born; a man and woman of a new, vigorous race, proud and valiant and splendidly strong; potent to mould the beginnings of their wilderness land. Her spirit went soaring to the stars in a high, fine moment of possible achievement such as she had never before known. And because she might never know its like again, she longed to hold it, to savor it to the full.

Yet quite deliberately she shattered it. She said abruptly: 'I'm going back to the States, Jim.' For the first time she called him by that name.

Something in the silence following her announcement gave her a sense of having dealt him a blow. After what seemed an interminable while, he asked in an oddly muted voice: 'How soon?'

Intuition told her he had wanted to say a great deal more, that his struggle to keep back the words had succeeded only by a tremendous effort of will.

She replied: 'My steamer leaves tomorrow afternoon.'

During another interval tide-rips made splashing, hollow sounds against the thin sides of the cruiser. He was quiet so long that Dian turned questioningly toward him. He stood with his back against the wheel. In the dimness she could see vaguely the shape of his dark, proud head, the paleness of his set face. 'If that is the case,' he spoke at last, in tones disconcertingly crisp and practical, 'I'll not keep you up any longer. You'll need to get some rest to-night.' Every trace of his recent friendliness was gone. There was a cool, remote quality in his voice that shoved her out of his existence, making her feel as if she were falling from a height.

She subdued the surprised protest that rose to her lips while pride clothed her in a sudden calm that matched his own. 'That is true,' she heard herself saying. 'I have many things to do tomorrow before I leave Ketchikan.'

'I'd like to stay in the galley, if you have no objections, until the tide is right. It's still a bit wet and windy aboard the *River Mist*.'

'Certainly. I'll give you one of the blankets from the forward berth. You'll find the lockers quite comfortable for a nap.' Dian was listening to herself with a nightmarish sensation of unreality. She felt a chilling distance widening between them, making them all at once alien to each other; making them stranger than strangers. Their voices were stiffly polite.

'Thank you,' he said. 'It won't be for long. My shallow-draft boat can make it through the Roar Hole fully an hour before you can go through with the *Golden Hind*.'

'You're going in to — Ketchikan?'

'No. Back to Sunny Cove... It won't be necessary for me to disturb you when I leave.' He looked down at her, his hands going back of him to the wheel against which he leaned. There was an implacable finality in his words: 'I'll say good-bye to you now.'

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Something in Dian reeled and went down, swept by an anguish of farewell. In her inmost soul she was crying desperately: 'But you're not going out of my life like this! ... You can't say good-bye to me like this!' Yet when she spoke aloud her voice sounded curiously level in the dusk of the wheelhouse. 'Of course. Good-night, Mr. Kemerlee... Good-bye.'

He made no movement to shake hands; said no word to detain her. Dian stood a moment looking at him, numbed by mysterious currents that held her immobile. There were but a few feet between her and the door that led to the sleeping-quarters in the forward cabin, yet she had to force herself to start across the narrow floor.... One step... two ...

She was halfway across.

He did not move or speak.

She tried to think of something that might delay her...

When nothing came, sickening disappointment took the form of a frantic prayer: 'O God... dear God, please let him say something to me — anything — *please!*' But there was only silence.

She was at the door now. He was going to let her go through... Her hand went hesitatingly to the heavy portière that hung there. Her fingers closed upon a fold, but she could make no further effort to draw it aside. Once that curtain fell between them, she knew he would be forever shut from her life.

An instinctive, dominant longing was tugging at her, restraining her. Her flesh was numb, leaden, but at the same time her inner self was being swept high on the crest of a tremendous emotional wave that was about to break. She was fighting against it, striving to save herself from an inevitable delirious headlong plunge she craved with every atom of her being. And even as she resisted, she found herself turning slowly, involuntarily to look at him.

'Dian...' The space between them thrilled to his low voicing of her name.

Her eyes met his in a dizzying flash of magnetic compulsion. She saw him start forward, and felt herself start. There was a confused moment of extraordinary joy and terror. Then his arms were enfolding her, drawing her, holding her close to his pliant, masculine body. They were clinging fiercely together in the darkness, pressing against each other, flowing into each other, merging in a blinding, soul-pervading rapture until the same exultant blood was coursing through their veins...until the same ardent, yearning substance of them began to relax in a partial appeasement of hunger. Dian became aware of the quick, unsteady thud of his heart against the wild beating of her own, of his seeking lips brushing her hair, her ear. She let her head fall back to meet the fervid softness of his mouth with hers. And night and the world whirled with her into ecstasy.

She came back to herself feeling every fiber of him growing tender and passionate with his kiss. She knew a delicious sense of danger; welcomed it; yet placed her palms against his chest and held herself a little way from him.

'Oh!' she breathed, looking up into his face. She was tremulous with the astonishing loveliness, the enticing strangeness of this male being. She, who had always been physically shy of men, marveled at her intense joy and delight in his touch; at her rapturous sense of completeness as she stood in the circle of his arms. She was conscious of his eyes in the dusk looking at her with the radiant gentleness of possession; conscious also of the restraint he was putting upon himself.

A new and exquisite curiosity about him drew her hands to either side of his dark head, and she moved them lingeringly down over his hair, over the oddly satisfying man-roughness of his jaw, over the sweep of his shoulders where

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the glow of his body came through his thin white shirt. Then she reached up wonderingly and put the tip of her forefinger in the tiny hollow above the bow of his upper lip.

A tremor ran through him, communicated itself to her, and the next instant she was lost again in the tender tyranny of his arms; lost to everything but the warmth of his kisses on her eyes, her throat, and his words spoken scarcely above his breath: '*God... you're sweet!... I knew it would be this way if I ever touched you!*'

4

Had he told her he loved her then; had he asked her to toss aside honor, home, kin, everything that had hitherto made up her world and go with him, Dian would have been powerless to resist him; powerless to struggle against him because he was an integral part of that terrifying, ecstatic tide that seemed to be sweeping her along a predestined course to some passionately beautiful climax.

But he told her nothing. Instead, he bruised her mouth in a final kiss of savage tenderness, and putting her from him stepped back so that the length of the wheelhouse was between them. 'Dian...' His deep voice was harsh, uneven. 'That was a perfectly rotten thing for me to do — at this time, and ——' He compressed his lips in an effort of repression before he went on: 'I —— Forgive me. Forget about it.'

The shock of the swift transition left Dian staring at him incredulous, speechless. That he should dare to place the cup of life to her lips only to snatch it away! That he should dare to kiss her into helpless surrender and then dismiss her lightly with the word 'forget'! A flaming sense of outrage and shame poured over her. Her heart shook with an intolerable conviction that she had made herself cheap. In the wake of this surged all her old distrust and antago-

nism: could it be that this was part of a Kemerlee plan to humiliate her, and through her, Eagle Turlon? Had this man been playing upon her from the first with a calculated blending of arrogance and protectiveness, of ardor and restraint, to bring about tonight's culmination?

Her hand clenched and she bit her lip in fierce resentment while memory flung her back to that meeting in the garden of the Floating Trap. He had said then, with mocking assurance: 'You're going to like me a lot — when you know me better.' Even at that time he had been sure of her; certain that she was his for the taking.

But what strange madness was it that had taken possession of her, robbing her of her self-control, making her act like — the comparison came to her in a fury of self-disgust — like an Indian girl during the fish run? The question groping about in the darkened chamber of her mind emerged suddenly into the white glare of comprehension: The run! That was it! The thing she had heard about all her life had tangled her in its web. She had been beglamoured by the brief dynamic spell of the Northern season; the spell that always vanished when the cool days of autumn came.

She had no idea how long she had been standing silent while these thoughts flashed to conclusion in her mind. A few seconds, probably. But she thanked God the explanation of her aberration had come to her in time so that she might leave this man with the flag of her pride still flying. Now, she must make him see how utterly impersonal, how inconsequential, was his momentary seeming subjugation of her. She could do it, because he was of the North. He knew the tradition. She would show him by her non-chalance how thoroughly she understood the nature of the incident just passed.

By a supreme histrionic effort she managed to meet his straight-gazing eyes with a dismissing shrug, a slight

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oblique smile. 'Aren't you being unnecessarily serious about this?' Her assumed lightness barely concealed the quaver in her voice. 'We had a truce, you remember, for the duration of the storm. But see ——' She gestured toward the open door that framed the calming shimmer of Green Waters. 'The storm — and our truce — are ended.'

'Dian! You ——' In the dimness of the wheelhouse she saw his tall figure start toward her, hands outstretched; then obviously he checked himself. Something almost like anguish was in his manner. But, Dian told herself sternly, he could not deceive her now that she was on guard against him.

'As for forgetting' — she lifted her chin in a low, significant laugh. 'Don't we Alaskans always forget our little emotional flights — once the summer is over?'

He winced as if she had stabbed him. She felt his eyes dwelling on her with an oddly speculative look; felt the air between them current with the flood of his unuttered questions, protests... heard him sigh. Then gravely he lighted a cigarette and, after a long, deliberate inhalation, spoke to her with sinister gentleness: 'So, after all, you are merely another experimenter in emotions.'

Seconds passed before she sensed the faint, contemptuous resignation underlying his speech. She flushed at the implication. Did he dare to place her in the same category with Eve Galliard? She wanted to cry out that he was mistaken; that she had acted without premeditation, without volition. But she throttled the impulse. Perhaps, in the stress of the moment, she had invested his words with meanings that were not there. Perhaps —— But what did it matter now, she concluded, in sudden lassitude. This was the end. She was profoundly weary of emotions. Let him think what he would of her; it was of no importance. She would be gone tomorrow — quite out of his life.

She answered him with calculated indifference: 'Judging

from your own adroitness in such matters, Mr. Kemerlee, I would say that we are a pair of experimenters.' She crossed to the portière and shoved it aside. 'I bid you good-night now. And good-bye.'

Stepping down into the forward cabin, she firmly drew the heavy hanging behind her and shut him from her sight.

The last thing she was aware of as she sank into a heavy-hearted sleep of exhaustion was his nervous pacing back and forth across the narrow floor of the wheelhouse.

CHAPTER NINE

I

DIAN was awakened by the blurred clatter of the alarm clock near her berth. She sat up, instantly alert and clear-minded. When the noise ceased, she listened intently. It was very still aboard the *Golden Hind*. The clock marked a quarter to five, more than an hour too early for her to take her cruiser through the Roar Hole. But the *River Mist* could go through. Was Kemerlee still asleep?

She dressed quickly, and, drawing aside the hanging on the door, looked inquiringly over into the galley. The emptiness struck her. Hurrying up into the pilot-house she threw open the door and glanced down alongside where the smaller boat had lain last night.

The *River Mist* was gone.

She felt a sinking disappointment that was followed by a curious sense of loneliness. She leaned in the doorway, her abstracted gaze scarcely noticing, at first, how splendidly the sun was rising on Green Waters.

After the storm there was a beginning-of-the-world freshness about everything: pure air smelling of ozone and rain-clean forests; encircling shores of silver-blue spruce with crimson cones glistening in the bloom of their branches; the Peer Gynt islet, a patch of land holding exactly nine tall pointed cedars, lacy and exquisite as ferns. The islet was mirrored in the smooth green lake that already held the reflections of timbered hills, the incredibly blue and joyous sky, and a flock of little sandpipers zigzagging over it.

All at once Dian straightened, roused by the sound of a splash at the mouth of a stream that came out through

banks of rice grass not far away. The placid surface of the small lake had parted to the shining leap of a salmon. And even as she looked, another silvery body left the water, hovered a moment in the air, and fell back... Then another... and another.

Alert now for the sign language of the wilderness, she noted the round, human-like heads of seals rising in solemn scrutiny; heard the faint, exultant skreighing of gulls far up the creek. Her blood quickened. These things meant a run of salmon. And if the silvers were leaping in Green Waters, the run was on at last along the inside channels of the Archipelago. Along the Turlon traps!

Then her mounting excitement was checked by recollection: She would not see the run. She was going South today... Still, she reflected, it would be an hour before the *Golden Hind* could go through the Roar Hole... She might... Yes, she would go up the creek at least as far as the waterfall!

Her decision sent her darting to the after-deck to launch the dinghy. With a start of surprise she saw that it was already in the water, its line slack on the green tide. Jim Kemerlee, before he left, had put it over the side for her. Against her will this sign of his thoughtfulness both touched and disturbed her. The man was out of her life now. She must thrust him out of her mind. With this determination she hauled in the line and climbed down into the tiny craft.

She stood, balancing expertly in the stern, and with an oar began paddling shoreward across the light-flooded water.

With an appreciation made poignant by the imminence of farewell, she drank in the stir of the woodland dawn. The place was musical with the gurgle of streamlets running into Green Waters. Seagulls flew over turning their sharp heads and crying: *Morning! Morning!* Ravens

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strutted and cawed with ribald exuberance along the narrow shingle; and as she beached the dinghy at the mouth of the creek, an eagle looked curiously down from his tree-top.

She waded through the coarse shore grass until she found the familiar thread of trail used by trout fishermen going to the falls farther up. The path swung her out of sight of the stream for a short distance between forested aisles, sun-slanted and charged with the pungency of cedars and wet earth and moss; through tangled glades of waist-high ferns, blueberry, and wild apple crystaled with last night's rain.

Each step brought nearer the wild discordance of gulls — a soulless, cruelly joyous sound that rode the wilderness above the rush of water and another noise, peculiarly arresting: the dull, fierce churning of small stones.

And then, abruptly, Dian came out at the edge of the creek at a point where the flow spread over a wide gravel bar. She stopped with a quick intake of breath, pierced by an unnamable, new-old thrill.

The Run!

First: sensate impressions of giant, overarching trees; air swarming with wingéd, predatory life; waters teeming with forward-struggling life; screaming of gulls; whanging strokes of eagles' wings; beat of tails and fins on stones, and the rushing of many waters.

Then the spectacle cleared, and she stood electrified by the tremendous energy emanating from the stream before her.

From bank to bank the swift, shallow channel was vibrant with salmon fighting their way up to the spawning grounds — myriads of slim, shining creatures surging upstream in a mass so compact it seemed as if she might walk across on them to the other side. Immediately below her, where the bank cast a shadow on the deepest part of the

creek, they swam silently, thousands on thousands, flank to flank, head to tail, layer on layer, those on top piercing the surface with countless dark dorsal fins. Mid-stream where spots of gravel emerged, they crowded and darted and shoved so vigorously that innumerable hundreds lay thrashing half out of water. Yet these, by flaying their tails and arching their glittering bodies, were indomitably inching their way forward over the stones.

Above the splashing multitude hovered a cloud of shrieking gulls, rising, falling, wings aflash in the sun as they skirred down on their helpless victims. The treetops were blotched with eagles already torpid with food. Eagles dropped with outthrust gaffs and rose again, their prey wriggling in their talons. Eagles were clotted on the bars tearing living salmon with beak and claw.

Across the creek a yearling black bear waded out, batted a fish ashore, bit out only the choice morsel of the throat, then returned to the water to bat out another.

Everywhere was feasting — and death.

Yet it was not death that Dian felt. Instead, as she watched the finny throng pressing on she sensed the presence of that mighty, irrepressible forward movement of life which takes no account of the individual; felt the pathos and gallantry of individual effort which makes for the perpetuation and perfecting of all species; was touched with awe and wonder and a faint terror; and for the first time in her twenty-four years groped to perceive something she knew must lie behind this physical manifestation: something elusive, intangible, but of incalculable import could she but grasp it.

Wide-eyed and enthralled by the mystery of the homing salmon, she moved on upstream toward the muted roar of the waterfall.

The falls came suddenly into view after a twist in the trail: a continuous volume of water pouring over a high

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rock ledge to fill the forest with its thunder and the dampness of its rainbow mists. It fell foaming into a broad green pool marbled with froth and edged with moss-grown boulders. The pool was in continual agitation, its depths glinting with the vigorous circling of salmon that were leaving the water a dozen at a time to launch themselves into the furious downpour that barred their way.

Some struck rocks that projected from the battering waterfall and were swept back, crippled, dying. Others, stronger, more skillful, succeeded the first time in scaling the torrent. And many, failing in their first attempt, fell back unhurt, to repeat their efforts until they succeeded.

The air above the pool was silvered with leaping fish.

There was something both wonderful and touching in the persistent courage of these sea-roamers. They were drawing to the end of their splendid, tragic cycle, a cycle begun four years before when they, darting fingerlings a few inches long, had found their way down this stream to the ocean. Matured and mated now, they were nearing the upper sands that had cradled them so that they might fulfill their destiny by planting the seed of another generation....

Dian went back to the *Golden Hind*. Despite the activities attendant on getting under way, she felt a vague Irish melancholy settling upon her. The wilderness swimming in sunshine, the faint skirling of gulls up the creek, the plop of rising salmon — all seemed tinged with a gentle sadness, a sense of futility, of inevitable oblivion.

When her anchors were up, she paused in the bow of the cruiser, her eyes on the cedars rearing straight, proud boles from the Peer Gynt islet. She felt a sudden envy of that form of life. With a loneliness of spirit she viewed the long, fading stretch of years ahead. 'A hundred years and I shall be gone,' she thought, 'but those trees will look out

over Green Waters, taller, stronger than they are today.' ... A hundred years.... Then this lake would probably be a country place for — Kemerlees. Descendants of Jim Kemerlee who was already building toward that future.... She brushed the thought of him aside.

Her languor and sudden lack of initiative were brought sharply to an end by the discovery that the *Golden Hind* was drifting.

She darted into the pilot-house and started the engine.

After circling Green Waters in a gesture of farewell, she headed in between the narrow confines of the Roar Hole. The advancing cruiser threw its bow wave across the gentle whirlpools of full tide and glided on until it came out into the wide, sweeping channel.

Here Dian's depression began to leave her.

The sparkling waterway that led toward Ketchikan was alive with signs of the run. Trollers and seine-boats speeding up and down; seals bobbing, salmon leaping, gulls flying. Even the close green shore marked fulfillment of the season with its lush thickets of black currants ripening and little wild apples turning red.

A fine Canadian liner, decks crowded with smartly dressed tourists, passed her on the way to Ketchikan. Some of the tourists, seeing Dian standing in the door of her pilot-house, a slim, golden-haired figure in outing green, waved down at her. She returned their greetings. With a quick, faint pang she realized they were going North, and she, tonight, would be heading for the South.

She passed the Indian Village at Mountain Point, a line of squatty grey lodges and totem poles lifting wide wooden eyes of inquiry in the morning light. Only a single smoke spindled up against the timber-plushed hills behind; the Indians were nearly all away on the fishing grounds.

Dian sped on rounding a wooded promontory set with

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tiny houses of the Indian dead, and a few minutes later swung into the straightaway that led toward the terraced slopes of Ketchikan. It was not till then that she remembered: in the press of swift events since she had left Sunny Cove, she had completely forgotten Eve and Ivor.

2

There was a jubilant air about Ketchikan this morning. The sun struck silver from the damp roofs of houses climbing the hillside. Smokes of industry billowed like banners against green mountains echoing to the clank of machinery and the sighs of exhausts from canneries lining the waterfront. Fish-tugs convoyed bright vermilion scows up and down the channel; outboard motor boats zipped like waterbugs over the smooth surface; a southbound freighter, black and red and stained with rust, crept through the maze of smaller craft. And there was the roar of a crimson seaplane banking over the town before it zoomed north to Juneau.

As Dian moored the *Golden Hind* among the spick-and-span gas boats at the float, she noted that its cream paint looked soiled and the worse for wear. She made a mental note to write to Sockeye to have it repainted when he installed the new engine for Ivor after she was gone.

She left the float and started briskly uptown, making her way through the fishermen who crowded the narrow street. They were slant-hatted and laughing, hailing each other with the galvanic cry: 'The fish are running!'

Eager tourists from the Canadian steamer now warped to the dock hastened, kodaks in hand, to take snapshots of salmon leaping in the creek that charged through the center of the town.

Radios and phonographs were going full blast in every place of business along Front Street. Dogs fought joy-

ously on corners. And the *Ketchikan Chronicle* was out with an extra announcing the glorious news.

Dian beckoned a boy and bought a paper; then, unable to wait until she reached home, she dashed into the Blue Fox Café to drink a cup of coffee while she read the fish news.

She slipped into the last vacant seat at the counter so that she might hear snatches of conversation between the fishermen eating huge breakfasts before going out to the fishing grounds. Their talk dealt with the number of cases each packing company must put up to make their contracts, the capacity of various traps along the coast, and the possibilities of pirate raids in the Ketchikan district, now that the run had started. Because she was so soon to be gone, Dian listened avidly, wanting to feel herself, if only for a little while, a part of that inimitable, intoxicating, live-for-the-moment fervor that comes with the salmon run.

She left the café and resumed her brisk walk along Front Street. 'The fish are running!' she kept repeating to herself. The very words were dynamic.

When she reached the long flight of steps that led up the cliff to Tyee Hill, she took them on the run, conscious of the pure, invigorating air she was pumping into her lungs and the vast spread of high blue sky against which shining clouds were bumping.

On the hilltop she paused a moment to look out on the winding arms of the sea that thrust themselves between the timbered islands. Now in those channels legions of silver salmon were swimming toward the mouths of their natal streams. Though from this height she could see nothing appreciably different, she could feel it — that tremendous creative force emanating from the green waters. But here, in industrial Ketchikan, her response was charged with the thought of the pack. A stimulating,

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pursuit-of-game energy winged her spirit and sent her blood coursing through her veins. She forgot that she, one of the North-born, was turning South today.

The hill road led her hurrying feet to the Turlon house, wide and grey and clinging to the edge of the cliff high above the water-front. She entered the front door and went as usual directly to the kitchen. 'Oh, Suey Woo!' she called, waving the newspaper. 'The fish are running!'

The old white-jacketed cook grinned a welcome over a cake he was beating. 'I know, Missy Dian, I know.' He nodded vehemently and pointed to a corner where a fat, jovial-looking old squaw in shawl and mother hubbard was squatted on the floor drinking tea. 'Snakhum, she tellee me!'

'Oh, hello, Snakhum! I didn't see you down there!' Dian smiled at the Thlinget woman whose husband and sons had fished for the Turlon canneries ever since she could remember. 'What brings you up from Mountain Point so early?'

Snakhum popped a cube of sugar into her mouth, drew a swallow of tea through it with a prolonged, ecstatic hiss, and then with matriarchal deliberation wiped off her chin before she answered: 'I come all same canoe.' Her fat shoulders began to heave to the chuckle that came rumbling from her throat. 'I come bring that Tyler Kemerlee's ooman back Ketchikan.' Above a toothless, ribald grin her little black eyes gleamed with elfin malice.

But Dian, accustomed to the kitchen visits of Turlon Indians, scarcely heard her. 'Where's Miss Galliard, Woo? Not up yet?'

At her question the Chinaman's face fell into sudden worried lines. He shook his head. 'I dunno. That Missy Galliard, she stay away allee night. She come home this molning — oh, maybe one hour ago.'

A faint feeling of apprehension pricked Dian's high

mood. She opened her mouth to question Woo further, but, catching sight of Snakhum's black eyes twinkling her avidness for white man's gossip, she replied easily: 'Oh, yes. I suppose Miss Galliard spent the night with one of the town girls. And Ivor, of course, is down at Blossom's.'

After a further word about breakfast she left the kitchen and ran upstairs.

The door of Eve's room was open; through it she saw the girl standing in a closet and rapidly jerking garments off their hangers. Still athrill with her good news, Dian called out: 'Eve! They've come at last! The fish are running!'

Eve whirled about. Her dark hair, usually so well-groomed, was wildly disheveled; her eyes had a glazed, hard look. For a moment she stared silently at Dian. Then, flinging her armful of garments to a chair, she came slowly forward, her little hands clenching. '*Fish!*' She loosed the word in a hiss of suppressed fury. 'My God! That's all you people think of! I loathe the very sound of the word fish. I loathe your raw fish country. I loathe your fishermen with fish blood in their veins. Fish-blooded, inhuman; cold as your glaciers; icy as ——'

'Good Heavens! What's the matter with you, Eve? What's happened?' Dian started toward the girl, circling to avoid the wardrobe trunk and suitcases lying open on the floor. While her alarm was tempered by memories of Eve's hysterical outbursts witnessed at various times down South, her thoughts flew anxiously to her brother. 'Has Ivor — is Ivor ——'

'Ivor!' Eve kicked a suitcase out of her way and looked up, her eyes glittering between narrowed lids. 'Don't ever mention him to me again — that interfering, lovesick idiot! If you want him you'll find him up at one of the houses on the Red Line — drunk!'

Horried, indignant, Dian laid hold of the girl's shoul-

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ders. 'What are you talking about?' she cried, searching Eve's furious face with unbelieving eyes. 'Ivor never drinks! He doesn't care for the stuff! He ——'

Eve wrenched herself from Dian's grasp and threw back her head with a metallic little laugh. 'Well, he changed his mind last night.' She caught up a cigarette from a spilled package lying on the dresser and lighted it with unsteady hands. 'If you don't believe me,' she went on, moved by Dian's stunned silence, 'call up your fat friend, Blossom.' She snatched a lace evening dress from the heap on the chair, wadded it recklessly and jammed it into a suitcase on top of a pair of pumps.

Dian had become terribly still inside. She stood, her unseeing eyes following Eve's movements, while Ivor's lean young face flashed before her: his protean grey Turlon eyes that could be so full of dreams or so full of the devil... The Red Line, a row of furtive little houses with windows curtained in red... Half-fears and denials wavered sickeningly through her mind...

She didn't believe Eve. The girl was hysterical and talking wildly... Yet, after a long moment, Dian turned and went quietly out to the hall telephone to call up the Floating Trap.

CHAPTER TEN

I

BLOSSOM and her spouse were sleeping late because the stormy night before had, in the words of Briny, been a profitable but 'ectic hevening at the Floating Trap. The early morning light shafted in round the drawn blinds of their chamber showing two still, cylindrical humps in the middle of an immense couch-bed that stood in a corner.

The bed was covered with a down quilt of bright pink satin which glinted through a fringed counterpane of yellow net liberally sprinkled with embroidered crimson roses — the handiwork of Blossom herself.

On the wall back of the couch hung a faded photograph of Blossom, youthful-eyed and twenty. From her high pompadour depended three 'spit curls' flattened like inverted question marks against her forehead. About her neck on a cable-like chain hung a locket, heart-shaped and half life-size. She was smiling self-consciously and touching heads with Alf, the bartender lover, a bold-eyed blond youth with a broken nose and a lock of hair sleeked low on his forehead to rise again in a wide, sweeping curl. Nailed beside the photograph was a large fat celluloid cupid, a valentine from Alf, turned brown with years.

The cupid had but one leg, the other having been torn off by Briny in one of his earlier jealous rages.

Above the heads of the sleeping pair hung a somewhat tardy legalization of the conjugal couch: their framed marriage certificate illumined with doves and forget-me-nots in color, and bearing a date less than ten years old.

The alarm clock on the night table went off at half-past eight and Briny sat up like a Jack-in-the-box, thin hair on

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end and face very brown above a pyjama jacket of baby-blue. He was in the middle of a wide yawn when he suddenly snapped his mouth shut, clawed up a handful of satin quilt, and sniffed at it distastefully.

'That blamed Black Narcissus smell again!' came from him in a nose-wrinkling whine. 'Blossom, 'ow can you keep on a-doin' of it wen you know 'ow I 'ates it? Gawd! Ain't you ever going to get over them ways? 'Ere I'm a lorful 'usband, and still I 'as to wike up every morning cached in eiderdown smellin' o' perfume just like a fisherman in a fluzzy joint after a big haul! Gor'struth, I carn't feel respectable! I carn't ——'

His lament ended in a gulp, for Blossom, her pink silk nightgown sliding off one fat shoulder, was slowly coming up from the waist like a mechanical doll. When upright she gave him a black silencing look, lips compressed, mouth corners drawn down. Then, turning from him in quiet scorn, she swung her plump legs over the edge of the couch, slid to the floor, and padded barefooted across the room to a closed door.

For a moment she pressed a listening ear against the panel; then she stealthily turned the knob and thrust her dark head inside. After a brief scrutiny, she closed the door and flatfooted it back to climb into bed.

Briny waited until she had lighted a cigarette before he asked, in a plaintive voice that had lost all trace of his olfactory grievance: 'Ow is 'e, Blossom?'

'Fast asleep, poor kid.' She heaved a sigh, expelling air and smoke through her nose with a gusto that set her great breasts quaking under the thin silk of her nightgown. 'That Eve!' She shook her head, ruminating. 'That damned little pill. She's just about busted Ivor's heart, that's what she's done.'

Briny, for once in full accord with his wife, nodded dismally. 'But she'll get hers. It's plain as the nose on your

fice she's fair orf her top about Tyler Kemerlee. An' you know 'ow 'e is. It's a shime the wy them two 'ave been hellin' around together — and she a friend of our Miss Dian.'

'How's that?' demanded Blossom suspiciously. 'You been holding something out on me?'

'Well, I didn't like to tell yer, Blossom. But that day Tyler brings Miss Heve over to town after the Sunny Cove party, he tells 'is crew on the *Who Cares* to go tike a holiday. Then 'e and Miss Heve go orf alone on the boat down Georgian Inlet way, Gawd 'elp us, just as if she's like one of the girls orf the Line! An' they stay away all that day and pretty near all that night. A bunch of trollers saw the *Who Cares* anchored there, an' I 'eard 'em checking up comparin' notes an' laughin' about it wen I was down in Fish Alley yesterday.'

'Dirty gossips!' ejaculated Blossom fiercely. 'It beats all how you men get to know everything that's going on.' She groaned heavily. 'But I'm afraid that little fiest will disgrace Miss Dian yet.'

'Well, it ain't all 'er fault,' protested Briny. 'Tyler knows better, but 'e don't give a damn about anything. Tike larst night, for instance. 'E 'ad no business bringing Miss Heve down 'ere, 'im knowin' it was Fishermen's Night wiv trollers, seiners, and halibut men all in on a toot, to say nothing o' taxi-drivers bringing the girls down from the Line.'

'Well, it ain't all his fault either,' countered Blossom, inhaling deeply. 'When he came in here with her last night, he leaves her at a table a minute and comes over to me. He tells me for Pete's sake to try and get Miss Galliard to go home. "She's a cheechako," he says, laughing in that way of his, "and I can't make her understand that in Alaska society there are no shades of grey — only black and white." I didn't know what he was driving at, but I

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went over to her and tried to explain that no real ladies came down to the Floating Trap on Fishermen's Night. Told her nice, too.' Blossom took another deep puff. 'And what thanks do I get?'

'That one says to me: "Oh, ruhl-ly!" says she, giving me the raised eyebrow and snooting me over the end of her nose. "Oh, ruhl-ly! Come, Tyler. We'll dance this." And she moves off with him — her with no back to her dress and every fisherman in the place piping her off with his eyes hanging out.'

Briny groaned.

'Then Ivor, poor boy, hears someway that she's here. He comes in and tries to get her to go home with him. But she won't even speak to him. She's sore because he's been following her round and crabbing her act with Tyler. Oh, I know that one!'

'Yes,' admitted Briny dolorously. 'She's flung the lad over like a carst-orf shoe. Looks to me like she's gone barmy along o' the fish run and Tyler, and don't give a damn who knows it.'

'Balmy is right!' agreed Blossom, crushing her cigarette to extinction and immediately poking another into her mouth. Mechanically Briny struck a match for her and applied it. With her eyes on him she spoke between puffs, drawing in the flame. 'Know what... she was trying... to palaver Tyler... into doing last night?'

'Wot?'

'I was at the table alongside them with Lars Swanson, who was cock-eyed and wanting to sit in my lap and blow snooze and moon vapors in my face while he told me of early days in Nome; but just the same I had my good ear open on Miss Eve Galliard. She was actually begging Tyler Kemerlee to take her out to the fishing grounds with him on the *Who Cares* this morning. Saying how romantic it would be and all that! Hih!' Blossom expelled a thin,

high snort pregnant with a meaning which Briny apparently got.

'Oly wars!' he exclaimed in scandalized tones. 'An' wot did Tyler say?'

'He just laughs lazy-like, knowing what a joke that was. Then he says: "That's the trouble with women. They never know when the party's over." And says she, lamping him with those big blue eyes of hers: "If you don't take me, Tyler, I'm just going to stow away and surprise you." He reaches out and pats her hand. "Don't you do that, little wildcat," he says in the crooning, baby-doll way he has with some women. "Don't you do it, if you know what's good for you. Women and fishing, especially my kind of fishing, don't mix." She's quiet a minute, then, says she: "Oh, lover, don't you want me any more?" And she grabs his hand and sits there gazing into his eyes with a funny look on her face. M-y G-o-d!' Blossom broke off. 'I pretty near blushed. And there was our boy Ivor watching her from the kitchen door, him looking fit to swallow lysol.'

Briny said with a troubled frown: 'I don't 'old wiv kids gettin' squiffed, an' it fair puts me up a pole to think Ivor got 'is the first time right 'ere in our plice. 'Ow ever did it 'appen, Blossom?'

Blossom took the cigarette out of her mouth, lifted her chin, and shot a shaft of smoke upward. 'Hell... I don't know,' she gloomed. 'He must have gone into the kitchen unbeknownst and took a couple of slugs of that Hudson's Bay rum while we were busy with Big Anna.... I wish to Heaven that woman would keep away from here when she's got a crying jag on. But, after all, I suppose we ought to be thankful. If it hadn't been for her man coming down for her, we'd never known, in the hullabaloo that was going on, that Ivor had bolted off up the Red Line to Julie's.'

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'Arrr, Blossom! Wen I 'eard that, you could-a knocked me down wiv 'arf a brick,' remembered Briny, passing a hand over his forehead. 'Seems like no time at all since 'e was a tiny little cub sittin' in 'is 'igh-chair wiv a yellow curl on top o' 'is 'ead.' He cleared his throat violently. 'I was trembling like a paper man in a gale o' wind wen I got out the Ford and started uptown after 'im. Bli'me, it was a night! Stormin' and dark as a nigger's pocket, wiv me sendin' her snortin' through the mud puddles and water dashing from her bow. I thort I'd never mike it.'

'And you say when you got there he was playing the piano?'

'Strike me purple, 'e was. Drunk, an' playin' like 'ell; them heavy loud choons that go boom... boom... BOOM, an' then talk sad and mournful in the bass like a graveyard on a rainy night. Julie and a couple o' the girls was sittin' round listening and lookin' ready to bust into tears, but bringing him more drinks every time he called for 'em. The minute I broke in, Julie catches hold of me and pulls me aside. "For cryin' out loud, Briny!" she says to me, desperate like. "Get the kid out o' here! We can't do no business with this goin' on!" she says.'

Blossom nodded sympathetically: 'I know just how the girls felt,' she said.

'But Ivor wouldn't come wiv me, no matter 'ow I coaxes 'im. 'E just looks up at me wiv them grey eyes o' 'is blazin' and still kind o' 'urt at the sime time, and kep on playin' and drinkin'. 'E fair 'ad sorrer roostin' on my soul, Blossom. That's why I telephoned to you.'

'Well, that's one time Tyler Kemerlee played into my hand,' said Blossom. 'I called him aside to the kitchen and told him his goings-on with the Galliard girl had sent Ivor on the toboggan. He shrugs at first and says it's none of his affair. "He's Eagle Turlon's kid and he'll begin sometime," he says. "Let him go. It won't hurt him any."

"Maybe not," I told him, "but it's going to hurt his sister a lot." I talked a little more on that line and he gave in. Between you and me' — Blossom closed one eye at her spouse — 'I think Ty's a little stuck on Miss Dian, and in the right kind of way, too. Otherwise he'd been making his usual play for her instead of galloping round with this cheechako Eve. Anyway, he promised to do what he could for Ivor after he took the Galliard girl home. It was time she was going, too. She was a bit tight, if you ask me. Though I'll say this for her, she carries her liquor ladylike.'

'Well, it must 'ave taken 'im a long time to get 'er under way, 'cause the storm was over wen he gets to Julie's.'

'It did,' explained Blossom. 'She didn't want to leave, and Tyler finally has to tell her it's to get Dian's brother out of a mess that he's going. But instead of helping, that set her off the handle worse than ever. She says Ivor has done nothing but interfere with her ever since she came to town, and she's sick of it. But if Tyler thinks more of Dian's brother than he does of her, all right. And with that she flounces out and Ty follows her.'

'Wot a night! Wot a night!' groaned Briny. 'Wen Ty gets to Julie's, poor Ivor is completely under. Ty picks 'im up in 'is arms like 'e was a baby an' carries 'im out to the car. It was coming dawn then, an' as we drove along Front Street we found everything astir. The news that the fish run was on had hit town. I could see Ty wanted to beat it for the *Who Cares* right away, but he don't desert Ivor. You saw 'ow nice 'e was about puttin' the lad to bed, Blossom. But I'll bet 'e burned up the road getting back an' rounding up 'is crew. They was all on a bender in Fish Alley last night.'

'Well, thank Heaven he's gone to the fishing grounds. Maybe now that little tart Eve will behave herself.'

'I figure we ought to send word to Miss Dian to come to town an' ——'

Briny broke off as the shrill of the telephone bell sounded from the kitchen. Blossom craned an ear; then sliding to the floor went out to the instrument and plastered the receiver against the side of her head.

'Hello!' she bawled. 'Yes, this is Blossom!... Oh-h-h-h!' Her voice softened and her scowl became a wide smile. 'You, Miss Dian! When did you get in?... Ivor?... Oh, yes, he's all right... Of course. He's right here with me and Briny... Well, he's asleep yet... Yes, honest to God, he's all right... Oh, well, you know how a kid will sleep in the mornings... S-u-r-e!... I'll wake him up right now and send him along to you, Miss Dian! He'll be there in less than half an hour!'

2

Dian hung up the receiver after Blossom's reassuring words.

She was more than ever puzzled over Eve. What could have happened to the girl to throw her into such an emotional state? Her voice, her wild exaggerations, indicated a positive hatred of Ivor. What could the boy have done? With a feeling compounded of sympathy, indignation, and exasperation, she went downstairs to the kitchen and waited while Suey Woo prepared a pot of coffee and some toast. Placing both with two cups on a tray, she carried them upstairs herself. A good cup of hot coffee would steady not only Eve's nerves but her own as well.

As she reëntered the girl's room and set the tray down on one end of the dresser, Eve turned belligerently from her packing. 'Take that out of here,' she said. 'I can't stand the smell of food this morning. And besides, I've no time to waste. I'm catching the afternoon steamer for Seattle.'

'Oh, we have plenty of time, Eve,' Dian began soothingly. 'I've got to pack also. I'm going ——'

Eve cut in heedlessly: 'I'm getting out of Alaska as quick as God will let me!' She snatched up a handful of shoe-trees and began jamming them into slippers. 'Alaska!' she repeated with bitter sarcasm. 'What a lot of bunk you had me believing about this country. Land where every woman's a queen and every man her slave!' She loosed a cascade of jeering laughter. 'I must have been out of my senses when I allowed you to coax me up here away from civilization, away from my friends, only to throw me into the company of fishermen, drunkards, bootleggers, and gutter-snipes!... Don't look at me as if it weren't so, Dian! That's exactly what I've found! I ——'

'I think you've said just enough about my country and its people!' There was a dangerous note in Dian's voice. She was measuring Eve with eyes that had grown dark under her fine-drawn brows. 'Must I remind you ——' She quickly bit her lip to check the angry words on her tongue. The law of hospitality forbade her reminding the girl that she was a self-invited guest. 'If you'll stop your hysterics,' she finished in a controlled tone, 'and tell me what has upset you so, I'll try to help you.'

'*You* help me! I've had enough of your kind of help!' Eve's face sharpened maliciously. 'I wish Alan had come up here this summer to see you on your native heath as I've seen you. It might have opened his eyes — the way you encourage other men to fall in love with you! — Oh, don't try to look so innocent, Dian! A blind man could see that both Jim and Tyler Kemerlee are so crazy about you they have eyes for no other woman when you're around. I ——'

'You're out of your mind, Eve. You've no reason to say things like that ——'

'Between you and that brother of yours, my whole summer has been spoiled!' Eve's voice was unsteady with

rage. She flung her cigarette to the floor and ground it under her foot. 'Listen to me!' she went on. 'From the very day I landed here I haven't been able to take a step without having that young fool tagging at my heels. After the party at Sunny Cove I was utterly fed up. I came to town to get rid of him. And you let him follow me! Last night I went with Tyler Kemerlee to dance at the Floating Trap. Ivor followed me again, determined to ruin my evening. When he failed in every other way, he drank himself into a jealous rage and rushed off to the sporting district.'

She paused a moment, but meeting only silence from Dian, continued in an aggrieved tone: 'And at last, when I thought I might enjoy a peaceful hour dancing with Tyler, that old harridan Blossom discovered Ivor was gone. She forced, absolutely forced, Tyler to take me home and go rescue the young idiot!'

'Is that all?' Dian was non-committal.

'All! That's only the beginning!'

Eve began to pace the floor, then stopped abruptly and faced Dian. 'After Tyler had gone, I sat here in my room so nervous I was shaking like a leaf. I couldn't go to bed after all I'd been through. The storm was over; I knew Tyler was going out on the early tide, so I put on my things and went down to the *Who Cares*.' Her wrath was giving way to self-pity. 'There was no one about yet, either on the float or on the boat, but one of the pilot-house windows was open. I crawled through and sat in the galley waiting for Tyler... I was so l-lonely,' she quavered. 'I wanted to see him once more before — before —' She faltered and brought her handkerchief to her eyes.

Between spells of tears and rage the remainder of the story came out: Eve, resenting not only Tyler's desertion of her at the Floating Trap, but also his refusal to take her on a trip to the fishing grounds, conceived an Evesque

plan of romantic retaliation. She stowed herself away behind some dunnage bags in an unused bunk in the pilot-house of the *Who Cares*. Later, Tyler and his crew, hilariously excited over the news of the fish run, dashed aboard and hastily shoved off in the dawn Dian had witnessed from Green Waters.

After an indeterminate time of waiting, Eve became aware from the rattle of dishes that the crew were eating breakfast in the galley, and that Tyler was alone at the wheel. Dian gathered that the girl had slipped from her hiding-place, and with a Cleopatra-before-Cæsar air, presented herself to the master of the *Who Cares*. But instead of welcoming her, he considered her in narrow-eyed silence for a moment. Then, with a sardonic grimace, he drawled: 'My... God!' He gave the wheel a turn and added: 'Don't you know, girl, the fish are running?'

'Fish!' wailed Eve. 'Fish! As if that was all that counted with him after I — after — Oh, the brute! The inhuman —'

'Oh, come! Don't take it so to heart!' soothed Dian, sex loyalty leaping to arms against Tyler's callousness. 'Don't give him another thought. He brought you back safely, and so —'

'Brought me back!' cried Eve. 'He didn't bring me back! That's the humiliating, shameful part of it! He *sent* me back with an old squaw from the village at Mountain Point. In a canoe!' Her voice rose indignantly. 'A canoe plastered with fish scales and paddled by a fat old Indian woman with a leering grin!' Eve's eyes flashed. 'That's Alaska for you! That's a sample of your Northern chivalry! I — I — Oh! I wish I could choke him — kill him —'

'Eve! My darling little girl!' a new voice sounded in the doorway. And Ivor, eyes bloodshot in his haggard young face, strode into the room and caught her protect-

ingly in his arms. 'Snakhum told me about it downstairs, sweetheart. But you leave him to me. I'll settle with him. I'll ——'

'For Heaven's sake, let go of me!' Eve, after one hostile glance, was struggling in the boy's embrace. But he caught her shoving little hands and began kissing them remorsefully.

'Eve! I was a rotter last night — deserting you — leaving you alone with that roughneck at the Floating Trap. I'm ——'

'You're a young ass!'... She freed herself from Ivor's arms with an infuriated forward thrust that sent her hair falling across her blazing eyes. 'Now go away and leave me alone!'

She was brushing the dark locks back from her forehead when Ivor, oblivious of everything but his adoration of her, caught her other hand. 'Oh, Eve! My little beautiful,' he pleaded, his sensitive face alight with reverent tenderness, 'I know I'm not good enough for you — not worthy of you, after last night. But I love you, Eve. I do — with all my heart and soul. Let me take care of you always, darling. Marry me and ——'

'Stop making a fool of yourself!' She jerked her hand away. Wrath had stripped her of her drawl, her languors. 'I'm sick of your schoolboy sentimentalism. You've hounded me to death. You've bored me to tears. I never want to see you again as long as I live!'

He gave her a stricken, beseeching look. 'But, darling! You can't mean that! Listen — at Sunny Cove you told me — you promised me ——'

'My God, can't you see I'm through with you!' The words were shrill with exasperation. She brought her small clenched hands up in front of her. 'Can't I say *anything* that will make you get out of my sight?' She began pounding the air with her fists. 'I tell you I hate you!'

You're driving me frantic! You're driving me mad! I — I ——' She caught a sudden sobbing breath and let her arms drop to her sides. Shaking with the effort to control herself, she stared up at the boy, obviously coming to some malicious conclusion.

He stood, white-faced and stunned, as if unable to comprehend her strange hysteria that sought to vent itself in hurting him.

She began to nod, her lower eyelids constricting, her small mouth thinned to a cruel, tight-lipped smile. 'There is one way I can get rid of you,' she said in a slow, peculiarly compressed voice.

'I'm going to tell you where I was day before yesterday when you were looking so jealously for me all over town.' She drew a deep breath and went on: 'I was out in the *Who Cares* with Tyler Kemerlee. Out alone with him down Georgian Inlet way. We anchored in the green reflections of cedars along the shore. All day I was there with him — and nearly all night... It was beautiful.' She spoke slowly, at first pausing between each sentence to watch Ivor's twitching face. But as memory swayed her, all else seemed forgotten. 'It was the most beautiful night of my life... Night... and blankets and pillows spread on the nets on the after-deck of the *Who Cares*... The vast quiet. The moon shining on the water and on the forest. Tyler holding me in his arms, singing to me, laughing down at me in the moonlight... Tyler, with the strange kisses of foreign women on his lips... Tyler kissing me until — until ——' She drew a quick, quivering breath.

'Eve! For pity's sake, stop!' implored Dian, suddenly throwing off the mesmerism that had held her. 'This is terrible! It's unnecessary — it — it's monstrous! Oh, Ivor, don't believe her!' She caught her brother's hand, but he drew it away. 'Don't listen to her. She must be out of her mind to talk that way!'

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'I know very well what I'm saying... I'm telling Ivor about — about what should have been my wedding night.'

Ivor was staring at her absorbing the truth. His eyes, that could suddenly go misty at the beauty of a sunset, of a phrase, of a chord of music, were glazed like those of a pain-racked animal. His lips were unsteady. He seemed unable to utter a word.

Eve's attention was again focused on him. She continued as if determined to goad him into speech: 'But afterward — this morning — your chivalrous Alaskan put me aside like a — like a squaw.'

Into Ivor's drawn face crept a grey look of death. 'Eve! Look at me!' He placed a trembling hand under her chin and lifted it as if she were a little child. 'You're not lying to me just to — just to make me go away?'

Witch-faced beneath her disheveled black hair, she met his tortured gaze. 'No, I'm not lying. Now' — she inquired with an air of bitter amusement — 'are you still so eager to make me your wife?'

Ivor's hands fell to his sides; he shivered as if a chill wind had blown on his heart. In silence he regarded her while behind the utter desolation of his look a battle went on. Boyish ideals died. Reverent young love, mortally sickened, crawled away. But chivalry strove vigorously and in the end rose to face the issue.

He made no move to touch her, but he said in a voice that sounded curiously old: 'Yes, of course, Eve... I still want to marry you.'

Obviously the answer was unexpected. For an instant she held her breath, one hand pressing her throat, a faint contrition softening her expression.

Ivor averted his eyes, adding tonelessly: 'I'll — we'll talk about it after a while.' He turned toward the door.

Eve started to speak, but he did not hear. He walked out of the room.

The two girls stood uncertain, speechless, listening to his receding footsteps in the hall. Then Dian ran out after him.

He had stepped into their father's room. When she reached the open door and looked in, he was kneeling before the lower drawer of the chiffonier in which Eagle Turlon kept half a dozen revolvers he had used during his Alaska days. Dian's strength left her when she saw that her brother had one of the weapons in his hands and was examining it. A second later she was rushing forward crying: 'No, no, Ivor! Not that!'

He came hastily to his feet. Holding the pistol out of her reach, he looked down at her in surprise. 'Don't be foolish, Sis,' he said reasonably. 'I'm not thinking of bumping myself off.' His tall, slender body straightened and into his haggard young face came something of the savage, fighting look of Eagle Turlon. 'I'm going to follow that bastard out to the fishing grounds today and kill him!'

Dian stifled a cry of horror. 'Oh, my God, no, Ivor. You can't mean it. It's murder! Listen to me, dear — think what you're doing — please ——'

'Don't take on like that, Sis. It's not going to do any good.' There was inexorable purpose in his words. 'I've made up my mind to kill him.'

Dian pleaded and reasoned until she realized with an icy feeling of terror that she had failed to move him. In desperation she called: 'Eve! Come! Oh, come quickly!'

The other girl appeared in the doorway and paused to watch brother and sister struggling over the revolver.

Dian turned to her beseechingly: 'Eve, can't you help me? Do something! Say something to him before it is too late!'

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Eve came forward slowly. 'Don't be so melodramatic, Dian. He's just trying to make a scene. Boys don't shoot themselves over such things.'

'You little fool!' Dian burst out. 'Don't you understand what you've started? Ivor's not going to shoot himself over you. He's going out to the fishing grounds to kill Tyler Kemerlee.'

Eve's eyes widened incredulously. 'Kill... Tyler?' she repeated under her breath as if trying to grasp the meaning of the words. Then with a sudden wild cry she launched herself at Ivor. 'Oh, no, no, no! Give me that gun!' she gasped, reaching. 'Give it to me! I'm not going to let you hurt him!'

Dian stepped aside, astonished at the passionate entreaty in the girl's voice and manner. But Ivor looked down unmoved, implacable, shifting his position only enough to render futile the clutching of her tiny fingers. He spoke in a level voice. 'He's going to die for what he did to you.' And with one hand put her aside and started for the door.

'Oh, no, no, no! I couldn't bear to have him die! Wait, Ivor! *Please!*' Eve flashed in front of him and tried to hold him back with her outthrust hands against his chest. 'Listen to me! Try to understand me, Ivor. I love him! I — I — love him more than anything else on earth — more than myself — more than God! He could grind me in the dirt — he could tear out my heart and throw me aside — he could shame me before all the world, and I'd love him just the same.'

The boy looked at her almost indifferently.

'That makes no difference to me,' he said drearily. He moved forward, heedless of her restraining hands. 'He's a cur. I'm going to get him.'

'He's not! You shall not hurt him! I — Oh, don't shove me aside! Wait!' Her voice rose distractedly. 'I

want to tell you something. Stay... just a minute, Ivor!' she pleaded. 'Just give me a minute to think!'

But Ivor, relentless, walked on, his superior strength forcing her backwards toward the door.

With a despairing moan she suddenly flung her arms about him fettering him with her small clinging body. 'You've got to listen!' she wailed, raising a supplicating face. 'You've got to! Don't you realize Tyler's not to blame? I made him take me out on the *Who Cares!*' she panted, 'I wanted to go. I'm responsible for — for everything.'

He glanced down at her, then turned his head with an impatient, unbelieving gesture.

'But it's true!' cried Eve. 'I tell you, it's true! — Oh, he won't believe me! How can I make him understand? — Listen, Ivor!' She was desperate now. 'Remember how — how I used to kiss you, and — and how you'd run away from me?' The boy stiffened, compressing his pale lips. 'I — I — Tyler didn't... that is, he wasn't like you... I love him. And I could get him in no other way. But now...' She paused, as if searching for words. 'Now, you see, he's coming South when I — when the fishing season's over. And — and' — her lifted eyes brimming with tears; her words came brokenly — 'he's — going to marry me. And so you see — it's all right, Ivor —' She stepped back a pace and tried to smile up at him through her tears. 'I wanted him, and I got him, and I was only trying to make you angry when I said he put me aside like a squaw. He didn't!' She shook her head for emphasis. 'He — Oh, don't look at me like that, Ivor! I can't bear it!' She dropped her face in the crook of her upraised arm. 'I can't —' She choked, and sobbing miserably ran out of the room.

Ivor stood very still, only the muscles of his throat working.

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Dian, shaking with conflicting emotions, stepped forward and took the revolver from her brother's nerveless, unresisting hand. 'Go downstairs and wait for me, dear,' she said. 'I'm going to take care of Eve.'

Half an hour later, she found the boy sitting before the old grand piano that had been their mother's. His blond head was sunk in his arms folded on the keys. A great sense of tears flooded her heart; compassion for Ivor, for Eve. She crossed the room and dropped beside him, encircling his body with her arm and holding herself close against him. They remained that way in silence for a time.

Presently Ivor slipped an arm across her shoulders and rested his cheek against hers — a touchingly smooth cheek that had yet to know the feel of a razor. He spoke in a strained voice: 'It beats hell, doesn't it, Sis?... I suppose I've been all kinds of a fool.... Part of it, though — the beginning — was beautiful.... But I'm a bit sunk just now.' Behind the words Dian sensed his pain and the tragedy of disillusionment.

After a moment he raised his head. His eyes were red. 'I need to get busy, Dian!' he said in a firmer tone. 'I'm going back to Sunny Cove tonight and get a job on one of Dad's tenders. And,' he added slowly, 'I need to be close to someone clean — straightforward. Do you think' — he looked at her with a smile that was piteously like the contortion of crying — 'do you think, Sis, you could stand by the old kid for a little while?'

Dian bit her lip to keep back the tears that threatened her voice. Then she promised sturdily:

'Sure, Ivor. Of course I'll stand by.'

3

It was the warm, bland hour on the edge of sunset when Dian and Ivor, aboard the *Golden Hind*, shoved off for Sunny Cove. Cloud shadows walked across the sun-flooded mountains. The fishermen's huts along the shores of Pennock Island across from town were sending up peaceful supper smokes. Yet the tranquillity of these familiar surroundings failed to soothe Dian's troubled heart.

As she stood at the wheel, her eyes were following the black trail of smoke she could see far down the channel — the last trace of the steamer that was bearing Eve Galliard away from Alaskan shores.

Dian had comforted the girl as best she could while she helped her to pack. She had put her aboard and stayed with her until the last moment, making her stateroom comfortable with fruit and flowers and books for the journey. Eve had not expected Dian to go South with her. On the contrary, she seemed eager to get away alone.

As the final whistle was blowing, Dian took the girl in her arms and kissed her. 'Good-bye, dear. I'll look you up when I get back to San Francisco. And I know you'll be gloriously happy when Tyler comes for you. I ——'

'Oh, don't! Don't say it!' Eve cried with sudden piteousness. 'I can't bear to listen!' Her arms tightened convulsively about Dian; she sobbed against her shoulder: 'Tyler's — not — coming for me.'

'Not coming?'

Eve shook her head. 'I — I was lying. I made that up to keep Ivor from going out after him... Tyler's through with me.'

'But — that can't be!' cried Dian indignantly. 'Not after — after —— Why, I'll go after him myself, the despicable cad! I'll make — I'll make him keep his promises. I'll ——'

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'No, no! You don't understand, Dian! He never promised me anything... And I — you — it's not what happened that night at Georgian Inlet that matters. That was beauti — No, I won't speak of that. But when he put me off his boat this morning — and sent me back to Ketchikan with a — with an old squaw in a canoe — Oh! Oh —' She raised her little wet face, her eyes flashing through her tears with a hint of their old fire. 'Don't you see the humiliation — the shame of it?' Her tiny hands came up clenched in front of her. 'I hate him for that! I could kill him for hurting me so. I could —' Abruptly her arms dropped to her sides. Her small mouth quivered. 'No, that's not true,' she amended in a curiously quiet tone. For a moment the two girls clung together in mutual misery while the tramp of shore-going feet and gay calls of good-bye sounded outside on deck and wharf. 'That's the worst of it, Dian,' she said wearily. 'I love him with all my heart. And I'm going away — never to see him any more. And — and — I don't know how I can go on living — without him...'

It was this scene that Dian was recalling as she watched the smoke of the steamer vanish far down the sunlit channel.

She blinked back tears that struck a million little stars from her lashes and looked out the pilot-house window to the bow of the cruiser where Ivor sat on a coil of rope. His elbows were on his knees, his bare blond head was resting in his upturned palms.... Then the memory of her own parting with Jim Kemerlee came, adding a personal sense of dejection to the general depression.... All her world seemed at odds. Her spirit, bruised by the changing emotions that had trampled on one another all day, began to sag into numbness. She tried to banish thought by keeping her mind on the monotonous, steady rhythm of the engine.

The *Golden Hind* was running close to the point she had passed that morning, set with the Indian cemetery. There was a sundown look of rest about the tiny, weather-silvered grave-houses backed by alders and mountain-ash trees, and facing the channel. They had no front walls and Dian could see the totems painted on the inside: strange-looking bears and wolves and eagles that gazed out with wide questioning eyes that were always asking 'Why?' 'Whither?' Those who lay so peacefully beneath were through with misunderstandings, she thought. Through with hate; through with love. The suns of summer brought out all the sweet green things about them; the storms of winter battered harmlessly against their snug grey roofs. ... For a moment she felt an odd envy of the dead.... Then she threw off her melancholy, and securing the wheel for a moment, put a record on the old phonograph and set it spinning.

At the sound of the music, Ivor looked up and came slowly to his feet. He walked aft to the galley where he began fussing with the stove.

A little later he stepped up into the pilot-house balancing the bread-board which served as tray for two cups of coffee. 'Time to mug up, Sis,' he said in fishermen's parlance. 'I just remembered Sockeye's saying that there's never a calamity that can't be lightened some by a good cup of hot Java.' A faint smile quirked the corners of his mouth.

Cups in hand, they stood side by side behind the wheel watching the channel ahead. It was like a mirror that had gathered the lights of the tinted sky. Off to the right the spires of the Mission Metlakatla rose pink against a tall green hill. All about the speeding boat rising salmon dimpled the placid water with widening rings...

They neared the vicinity of the Turlon floating trap anchored off Kemerlee Head. They could see it across the

inlet, resembling from a distance a boom of logs with a sentry-box on one end.

'There's a tender there getting ready to brail,' remarked Dian with the glasses to her eyes. 'Let's scoot over for a little while and watch them lift the trap.'

Her brother agreed without enthusiasm and she laid her course across the inlet.

When Dian eased the *Golden Hind* alongside the floater, half a dozen young fellows in protective rubber clothing were springing about surefootedly on the criss-cross frame of logs. As Ivor made ready to throw the bowline, one of them, running to catch it, grinned and shouted: 'The run is on full blast along the inside channels!' All the others paused in their work to greet brother and sister with wide smiles. 'Fish, Miss Dian!' 'They're coming in at last!' 'Sunny Cove will get its pack!'

Dian began to feel the excitement in the air.

She and Ivor leaped from the deck to the outside timbers. Surefooted as any of the lifting crew, Dian ran toward the spiller beside which lay the tender and its bright red scow. The log along which she stepped floated on fifty fathoms of emerald water and she could see, glimmering far below, the webbing which formed the intricate tunnels and enclosures that steered the forward-moving salmon toward the spiller. In the clear green depths millions of tiny herring glinted like silver confetti sifting about the dark shadowy forms of the salmon.

The spiller itself, a huge square of water surrounded by sunken net, was filled to the top with threshing fins and tails.

'Fifty thousand fish if there's one!' exulted the captain of the tug.

Two men began pulling up the bottom of the spiller and hooking the webbing over the brailing plank. The salmon, thrown toward the side where the tender lay, splashed and

leaped with renewed vigor until the fury of their commotion dimmed the shouts of the crew.

Aboard the tender the engine started; there was the added clatter of winches, the creak of the hoisting boom that swung from the top of the mast like a long arm to dangle the weighted net brailer above the spiller.... A pause, a running rattle, and it dropped into the churning mass below. A scooping movement brought it high again filled with squirming life — three hundred salmon — which it swung back and poured like a living waterfall into the hold of the scow.

With a noise like thunder the fish fell on the empty bottom, arching, beating, slapping their tails against the boards and against one another until flying scales splattered and clung like spangles to the black oilskins of the crew.

The men laughed and shouted in the joy of the haul, and Dian joined with them as she moved back to avoid the showering spray.

Again and again the brailer moved back and forth to spill its shining cascade on top of the increasing thousands of live salmon thrashing in the hold of the scow. The sound became deafening.

Presently it crept into the blood like the beat of a savage drum.

Dian thrilled to the indefinable spell of that scene of wild activity that somehow wove itself into the benign splendor of the sunset land: cool smell of salt water on spruce; fresh smell of live fish; tranquillity of the fiord reflecting peaks of rose and violet against a clear golden sky; and dominating all, the exultant yells of fishermen bringing up the living silver of the sea.

Disjointed phrases winged with elation skimmed through her mind: 'My land! My fish! *Now*. What do I care for anything but this! What concern have I for tomorrow?'

Her thoughts flew to the huge standing traps near the open coast. The haul would be greater there. One of the crew had reported Sunny Cove's running steadily since six o'clock this morning... The pack! That was the thing now.

Suddenly she could scarcely wait to get back to the canery; to hear the clank of machinery, the continuous panting breath of the exhaust that told of Sunny Cove's five powerful, clinking lines rushing freshly caught salmon into the cans.

'Ivor!' she cried impulsively, turning to her brother. 'Let's go!'

He raised his abstracted gaze from the distant hills; his young face looked bleak. He assented with an absent-minded nod.

4

By the time the floating trap had disappeared behind them, twilight was waning. They were in the narrower channels again and on each side the little valleys between dim purple mountains were sinking into sleep drawing their mists over them. A tiny rapier star quivered in the clear evening sky.

Ivor stayed out in the bow of the cruiser until the last vestige of light faded. Then he came back and took his trick at the wheel. They were running without lights other than the red and green side lights. His tall, slim figure, slightly bowed, was outlined against the open door and Dian glancing at him felt her heart grow soft with pity. But intuition told her she could best serve him by remaining silent.

As she stepped out to the deck and made her way up to the prow of the *Golden Hind*, she planned to have the cruiser repainted and the new engine installed when she

got back to Sunny Cove. Ivor might then take an interest in running the little craft.

She knelt in the extreme point of the bow, making herself comfortable by folding her arms on the bulwarks and resting her chin on them.

Night had fallen. The darkling channel stretched ahead with only a liquid sheen to distinguish it from the bulk of the mountains that came down close on either shore. The water was brilliantly phosphorescent. It rippled away from the cutwater, wings of silver fire on black, streaming along the sides in reptilian shiftings. Occasionally the dorsal fin of a startled salmon zipped across the bow, a tiny meteor on the jet-black tide. And once the cruiser glided over a school of phosphorescent fish, hundreds of luminous creatures that glowed and darted like silver flames in every direction, turning the depths to dazzling, breath-taking beauty...

The vast soft darkness closed in again — distances pricked out by winking buoy lights... Dim, spruce-crested islets appeared to swim gracefully aside to let the *Golden Hind* go by... And once in a while a fishing boat passed so close Dian could make out the watchful figure of the helmsman in the pilot-house.

Dian loved to travel at night along these peaceful channels. She was suddenly very glad she had not gone South.

When the cruiser came out into the bay at the head of which lay Green Waters, she remembered with a small shock of surprise that last night at this time she had been storm-bound there with Jim Kemerlee. Could that have been only a few hours ago?... A warmth suffused her. For the first time she wondered what he would think when he saw her returning to Sunny Cove.

Then, even as she was shrugging the thought of him aside, she had a flashing impression of his face bending to hers; the feel of his arms holding her close against his

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beating heart. The unforgettable ecstasy flooded her for a moment, sweeping everything else from her mind... She banished it, but it left her a little dizzy.

She thought suddenly of Eve and Tyler alone on the *Who Cares*... Some such thing must have happened to them also... Suppose Jim had not thrust her from him just when he did, and placed the length of the pilot-house between them? What might have happened?

Dian faced the question with characteristic honesty and admitted she didn't know. She, pledged to Alan Bronson, and loving Alan Bronson, had nevertheless forgotten him in that one madly rapturous moment. Nothing like that had ever happened to her before. She realized what strange, undependable beings men and women were under such circumstances.

And herself?

She was awed and surprised to find that she was capable of such intense emotions. She supposed she should feel a sense of guilt, of remorse. Yet, when she searched her heart, she found only wonder... Why was that? Honor, fidelity, were they but fine-sounding names that could be swept aside by another word — love? But no! It wasn't love she had felt, she told herself fiercely. He had for her only that peculiar fascination that was born of the Northern season. Nameless. Potent. Dangerous. And beautiful... Could it be that Jim had found it dangerous, and for that reason had shoved her aside so roughly because he was afraid of — himself?

It dismayed her to find that this possibility invested him with a new allure. She must put the memory of Green Waters away from her — at least until she was so old she might think of it with safety. But perhaps, when she was old, she would have forgotten it — that night of July thirty-first. She had read of things like that. The thought made her a little sad.

Tonight when the *Golden Hind* reached Sunny Cove, Jim, together with all the rest of the canning crew, would undoubtedly be in bed and asleep. It would be after midnight. Now that the run was on, it might be days before he was even aware of her return. There was no time for personalities when the fish were 'running good.' She was glad of that...

As promontory after promontory gave way before the advancing prow of the cruiser, Dian noticed far ahead a strange glow reflected against the dark sky. The Northern lights coming early this year was her mental comment. The light was lost to sight when the *Hind* glided in under the shadow of a high mountain... Only half an hour more, she thought gratefully, and Sunny Cove would come into view.

She got up and stretched her cramped limbs; then started to walk back to the pilot-house.

At the moment a darkened seiner towing a canoe passed swiftly going in the opposite direction. Dian paused instinctively and balanced herself to the *Golden Hind's* rocking in the wash of the other craft. She noticed a burly figure on the stern deck. The boat was so near that when the man lighted a cigarette, the flare of the match disclosed his face for a moment.

It was big Red Skain.

Dian slipped into the wheelhouse and stood beside her brother. 'We're less than two miles from home, Ivor,' she said as the cruiser moved round the last point of land that shut off the straight sweep of inlet leading to their destination. 'A few minutes more and we should be able to see the riding-lights of the old *Star of Alaska*!'

The words had scarcely left her lips when she and Ivor both gasped and leaned forward staring with wide, incredulous eyes through the window of the pilot-house.

Ahead, between the blackness of sky and water, a mass

of scarlet and orange flames licked up, illuminating the night with hellish brilliancy. Amid the billows of smoke silhouettes of roofs flashed and disappeared. The lofty rigging of the *Star* thrust up against the glare, vanished... and again reappeared. Then an immense volume of coal-black smoke swept over all to mingle with the darkness of the night.

‘Great God!’ breathed Ivor, leaping for the controls to throw the engine wide open. ‘It’s Sunny Cove! Burning down on the eve of the run!’

CHAPTER ELEVEN

I

AT DAYBREAK, Dian stood beside Sockeye Jones on the shore above the smoking ruins of the can warehouse.

That long building, which had been erected over the water, was now a blackened desolation of tangled metal sagging over the charred piling that had once supported it. Its contents — Sunny Cove's entire supply of collapsed tins together with the machinery that re-formed them into cans for the reception of the pack — all were a useless, heat-welded mass. And the mass had sunk below the tide which was now swirling half-burned timbers, box shooks, and ashes among the smoldering piles.

Dian's weary grey eyes moved from the crew of workmen clearing away the accessible débris of the can warehouse to the great canning plant itself. Its once immaculate white paint was scorched and smoke-stained, but it had been saved intact. She was profoundly thankful for that; but at the same time she felt goaded by a maddening sense of impotence. Their hands were tied. Sunny Cove could not put up a single case of salmon until a shipment of set-up cans could be sent from Seattle — a matter of four or five days at best. Twenty-four hours, when the fish were running, often decided the success or failure of the annual pack.

There were but fifteen days left in the fishing season.

Sockeye was stricken by this calamity happening in his own department just as the run was beginning. He had aged overnight. His little hat, a soiled ruin, sat his head at a level angle of dejection; the tawny forelock above his reddened eyes was singed; the stubble on his face streaked with soot.

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'It's got me beat!' he shook his head, pondering. 'I can't understand it. The blamed warehouse bursting into flame right underneath the re-forming lines so that we hadn't a chance to save a thing. And to cap it all, it took us ten minutes to get the water pressure released... There's something rotten in Denmark, if you ask me.'

'Tell me about it from the beginning, Sockeye.'

'Well, you see the fish began coming in about six o'clock yesterday morning. Holy Sailor, how they did come, Dian! Seiners, tenders, fish-scows — every darned thing loaded till the scuppers were awash! Every man on the plant was wild with joy and working at top speed to get 'em in the cans. We kept at it sixteen full hours; then all hands, dead tired, turned in after ten o'clock last night to grab a little sleep because I intended starting up the lines again at four this morning.

'The watchman as usual went to the cookhouse after eleven for his coffee. He must have been there over an hour, because it was past twelve when he turned in the alarm. And, by Judas! Before we could get into our pants the whole warehouse seemed to be ablaze from below. There's something queer about it — something mighty queer!'

Dian listened, heavy-hearted, her eyes on the inlet, calm and beautiful in the morning sun. A Turlon tender was bringing in a fish barge brimming with salmon.

'Look at that, Dian!' exclaimed Sockeye bitterly. 'Here we've been praying like hell for fish for the last three weeks, and now that they're running in all twelve traps we can't put up a mouthful.'

'Couldn't we borrow tins from any of the packers hereabouts until ours arrive?'

The foreman shook his head. 'Too late in the season. Everyone's working like mad to get a pack. If it had happened two weeks ago — but there's no use talking about that now.'

‘What has — Kemerlee done about it, Sockeye?’

‘Plenty. While the warehouse was still burning, he radioed Seattle for a load of set-up cans; got in touch with a couple of packers who agreed to buy all our surplus fish, and ——’

‘But it will take nearly a week for the tins to get here! We’ll have only ten or twelve days maybe to put up the pack. Can we do it?’

Sockeye shoved a cigarette into his mouth and permitted it to dangle unlighted. ‘The Lord only knows,’ he groaned. ‘We may — if the fish continue to run.’

While he had been speaking, a cluster of men began to gather in front of the bookkeeper’s office. Dian saw Jim Kemerlee come through the door and descend the steps. He looked blackened, haggard, and unshaved in the brash light of morning. After a few words with Olaf, he fell into step with the beach foreman, and they led the others down to the wharf, where all of them boarded the *Thlinget Chief*.

The tender pulled out immediately and sped across the inlet.

‘What’s he going to do now, Sockeye?’ inquired Dian.

The foreman struck a match and drew the flame into his cigarette before he replied: ‘Putting extra watchmen on all the traps. It’s up to us now to keep ’em full. Impounded salmon live in good condition for ten or twelve days. We’ll brail out and sell just enough each day to keep fresh ones coming in, so when the cans do arrive, we can start packing with the twelve traps full of fish.’

‘But why the extra watchmen?’

Sockeye shrugged. ‘The run’s petered out on the West Coast. Packers over there are already hollering for all the fish they can get, and outbidding one another.’ He paused for a moment. His next words sent a premonitory little chill through Dian.

'Jimmy's getting ready for pirates. And believe me, I'm afraid the kid's going to have his hands full.'

2

During the ensuing few days an atmosphere of disaster hung over the silent cannery. For Dian the hours dragged by filled with doubts, suspense, dejection. The inactivity of the plant was made almost unbearable by tantalizing evidences of the run abounding everywhere: the strident exultation of gulls; the leaping salmon; seals bobbing off-shore, and loaded tenders and seiners plying past low in the water with hauls for the Island Packing Company.

She had not spoken with Jim Kemerlee since her return to Sunny Cove. She even doubted that he was aware of her presence at the plant, so busy was he with his protective campaign.

The three tenders had been assigned to patrol duty between the widely separated Turlon traps. Ivor, at the first hint of trouble with pirates, had shaken off the inertia that followed Eve's departure and thrown himself wholeheartedly into the defense of their father's property. He was among the extra watchmen stationed at Cape Fox, a trap noted for its tremendous hauls of the coveted sockeye salmon.

Dian viewed Jim's precautions against raids with a certain condescension. No one, she thought, would dare to lift fish from a man so powerful on the coast as Eagle Turlon. Apart from this, her father was friendly with all the pirates; knew them all by their first names; he bought from them without asking questions. Dian was naïve enough to give everyone, even a pirate, credit for the same sense of fair play that she herself possessed. A sense of fair play would, of course, preclude anyone's taking advantage

of the hard luck that had befallen Sunny Cove during Eagle Turlon's absence.

If only her father were here now!

Though she had more than once regretted sending him that radiogram about Jim Kemerlee, she hoped now that he had received it. The morning after the fire she started up to the radio cabin to question Sparks again about the possible delivery of the message.

As she left the *Star*, she paused a moment to look over the side at the painters who were at work on the *Golden Hind*, tied to the float. Dian was taking advantage of the lull in cannery activities to have the new engine installed and the cruiser itself repainted, black with jade trim, in accordance with Ivor's preference. But as she considered it now, she wished she had retained its original cheerful color scheme of cream and orange. The dark paint looked undeniably smart — but somber. She thought about it as she went ashore. In some indefinable way it added a touch of foreboding to the still, dull day.

At the door of the radio cabin she paused to look out over the inlet. Grey August fogs were sweeping in from the sea hiding everything beyond the docks. The rigging of the *Star of Alaska* stood against an opaque curtain of vapor behind which eerie wailings of fog sirens told of passing fish-boats.

As she crossed the threshold of Sparks' domain, that nonchalant young man laid aside a copy of 'True Confessions' and greeted her: 'Swell weather for fish, Miss Turlon. And pirates,' he added.

'You don't really think we'll have any trouble with pirates, do you, Sparks?'

Sparks raised an eyebrow and drew up one corner of his mouth. 'W-e-l-l, they've never had much chance at the Turlon traps before because your dad always had 'em brailed every day. But now that we've got to hold the

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fish, you sure can't blame pirates for sniffing around where pickings is good. We'll have to defend them' — he shrugged philosophically — 'or take our medicine.'

'Yes, I've heard that reasoning before, Sparks.' Dian sat down and they began to talk.

Half an hour later, just as she was getting ready to leave, the instrument began to tap. Sparks turned from her to listen. All at once she saw his blasé expression vanish in a look of intense interest. . . . Suddenly he called to her over his shoulder:

'By God, they've lifted the Cape Fox trap!'

Dian sprang from her chair. Sparks immediately devoted himself to listening. She strained every faculty to catch the clicking that only mocked her with a sense of her own incomprehension.

'Got twenty thousand sockeyes!' Sparks flung at her between taps.

Dian stepped close to him and stood tensely twisting her clasped hands. Then, unable to control her impatience, she began to walk up and down the room, her anxious eyes on Sparks' listening face.

He kept muttering under his breath. 'Well, what do you know!'

'Who — what ——' began Dian, the moment he swung from the instrument.

'This is a hot sketch!' he burst out indignantly without a trace of his former philosophical attitude. His eyes were shining with the light of battle. 'Those birds took advantage of the fog and slipped right along in the wake of the patrolling tender! Tied up to the spiller, by gosh, before the patrol had been gone half an hour!'

'And Ivor! Did you hear anything about my brother?'

'Oh!' Sparks waved his hand. 'The kid's okay. The Cape Fox watchmen, none of them, had a chance to go out to the trap. You see, Miss Turlon' — in his earnestness

Sparks was drawing diagrams in the air — ‘two of the masked pirates stood right here on the stringer of the trap nearest the shore. Then every time the watchmen tried to row out from the beach in their skiff, these bozos let fly a bunch of rifle bullets, while the other guys belonging to the outfit lifted the spiller and brailed it.’ He took a deep breath. ‘Twenty thousand sockeyes! A six-thousand-dollar haul!’ He nodded his head disgustedly. ‘Can — you — feature — that!’

‘And they got away without anyone’s seeing who they were?’ Dian cried in indignant astonishment.

‘Got away clean!’ he said succinctly, and rammed a cigarette into his mouth.

Dian turned and went slowly out the door. Her first surge of outrage was followed by a feeling that her mind had paused appraisingly.

She made her way back to the *Star of Alaska*, and, ascending the gangplank, walked aft to lean on the taffrail. She wanted to be alone to look the situation squarely in the face.

‘So they dared to rob a Turlon trap!’ she said to herself.

If they did that — they might do other things. She recalled incidents of past seasons. The ordinary pirate, she knew, always left the fish-pound he looted in as good fishing condition as when he found it, resetting tunnels and pulling taut all the lines. But occasionally there came a revengeful crew who, after stealing what fish they wanted, put each trap out of commission by cutting the webbing. The damage could be repaired only by a diver, and, since there was but one in this vicinity and each packer had to wait his turn for the services, the loss in many instances was incalculable.

If, as Sockeye insisted, the can warehouse had been fired by an enemy, might not that enemy also lift the Turlon traps and wreck them if he felt so inclined?

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Such sabotage would destroy Sunny Cove's last chance to put up the season's pack.

Never before now had she realized the menace of law-breakers. Eagle Turlon had devoted his life, his brain, his strength, to the establishing of a splendid industry; he maintained his particular unit by the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars each year. And a calamitous turn of Fate had delivered his property to the mercy of pirates, looters, parasites...

Pirate Cove... What had Tyler said of it? They gathered there, the black-flag fleet, to plan their raids so that two should not select the same trap for their operations! Dashing, romantic, it had sounded when he told of it that night. But now — her vivid imagination pictured the lawless fleet with captains consulting, planning to swarm on the Turlon traps heavy with impounded fish that must be held for days. She saw nothing romantic in their activities today. She felt only the sly threatening of malicious vandals; a fear for Sunny Cove. And a great helplessness.

Presently came a reassuring thought: Sunny Cove was not resourceless with Jim Kemerlee carrying out his plan of defense.

Then she felt her face burn, remembering her encounters with him over the plundered hauls of Red Skain, and her former attitude toward these pirates against whom Jim had now to protect her father's property. She had derided the superintendent's business ethics as cowardice; his adherence to the cannerymen's agreement he had signed as unfaithfulness to his employer... She had exalted the physical courage of thieves; condoned their activities. 'Until they raided the Turlon traps,' she told herself in a moment of self-scorn. 'Then you found it a horse of another color!'... A new respect elbowed its way into her estimation of Jim Kemerlee: from the first he had pursued his course, straight, honorable, without compromise, re-

gardless of the disfavor of practically the entire crew of Sunny Cove.

But, whispered the old antagonism and distrust, might not his apparent straightforwardness in this case be but a mask behind which he was working against the interests of Eagle Turlon?...

Her head was whirling with uncertainty, apprehension, and a growing determination that she herself must do something in the situation. Aware suddenly of the nervous tension that had gripped her, she turned and made her way back to her stateroom to see if she couldn't divert her mind.

She curled up on the couch and tried to read. A moment later she threw the book aside and began to pace the floor. Her harried gaze moved about the room until it rested on Alan's picture in its frame of tooled and gilded leather. She remembered all at once that she hadn't written to him for days. Dismayed at this neglect, she dashed to the desk and seating herself hastily got out her portfolio.

She caught up her pen, but she could think of no words with which to begin her letter. What was wrong with her? Was it that she had lost touch with Alan? If only he had come North as they planned, he might now be beside her advising, cheering, comforting her during this time of depression.... There had been a note of impatience in his last wire. He was beginning to believe, poor fellow, that she was never coming back... She would this instant write him all that had happened at Sunny Cove during these last harrowing days.

Dipping her pen determinedly into the inkpot, she wrote in a firm, clear hand: 'Dearest Alan:' Then she threw the sheet to the floor and began another: 'Darling:'

As she sat groping for the next words, she became aware of loud voices outside at the float off the stern of the *Star*.

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After a moment's listening, she sprang up with an air of release and ran out again to the taffrail.

A seine-boat from the Island Packing Company had come in through the fog and was now lying below. The crew, in a state of mild excitement, were all talking simultaneously to Olaf, who stood with an expression of anger growing on his wide blond face. The conversation was in Swedish, of which Dian could understand only the expletives.

The moment the seiner had shoved off again into the fog, she called to Olaf. He came lumbering up the gang-plank to the deck, his blue eyes flashing with rage. His speech was so salted with his native language that she had difficulty understanding him.

But finally she gathered that the Island Packing Company, in accordance with their agreement with Jim Kemerlee, had sent a tender with a scow to brail a certain number of salmon from several Turlon traps. When they had a full load in the fish-hold of the tug as well as in the barge, they began the return to the cannery towing the scow at the end of rather a long line. Because of the density of the fog their tow was not visible from the tender, but it could be felt at all times jerking along behind.

When they arrived at the Island Packing Company's cannery, they found themselves the victims of the most brazen fish robbery ever known on the coast. Somewhere *en route* their scow had been cut loose and a sketchy raft of logs substituted. Adding a touch of deviltry to the transaction was a printed note found in a can nailed to one of the logs, a note couched in perfect English thanking the crew for the haul of ten thousand salmon acquired without the trouble of brailing a trap!

The note was signed 'The Lynx.'

The Lynx! After Olaf had gone ashore, Dian paced the foggy deck of the *Star* while her mind went back to that

night at supper when Tyler and Ivor had told of this pirate's exploits. How could she have applauded the bravado of such a man? Still, he had not seemed real then. He had seemed like some dashing figure from a story of adventure or from the pirate readings of her adolescent days. Now, as she repeated the name to herself, she felt the Lynx to be terribly alive. And menacing.

What if this dare-devil turned his diabolic attention to the Turlon traps? The thought was burdened with dread.

Again she computed the time that must elapse before the cans could arrive at Sunny Cove. Three more days if all went well.

But good Lord, anything might happen in three days!

With a hope that Sparks might have some cheering news, she made her way ashore and up to the radio cabin.

'I'm afraid we're in for it now, Miss Turlon,' was his anxious greeting as she entered the door. 'Longshoremen's strike down in Seattle. Can't get our cans loaded until it's settled. Can you beat it? That means we've got to guard those confounded fish indefinitely.'

3

As if the very weather were in league against Sunny Cove, the heavy fogs continued to pour in over the islands along the coast. Sockeye had gone to town on cannery business, Jim was out on the fishing grounds; but Dian, constantly in touch with Sparks and Olaf, knew what was taking place at all points.

Pirates swarming over from the West Coast to the Ketchikan district were concentrating on the Turlon traps full of impounded fish.

Dian knew that the interest of the entire section was now directed to the situation at Sunny Cove; and that Eagle Turlon had a certain sympathy from his competitors

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who were all running their plants to full capacity. But she was aware also that not a few of them stood ready to buy the salmon pirated from her father's traps.

Her first hot indignation over this was succeeded by the recollection of her own willingness to shut her eyes to the source of Red Skain's hauls. She faced herself mercilessly, and emerged from a final self-analytical hour with a new sense of values.

The third day after the fire came the news of another raid, this time at Cape Rakkon.

In this case there was nothing furtive about the dark green craft that had come alongside the trap and hailed the watchmen in their cabin on the shore. Everything seemed in order. The unsuspecting guards rowed out and the captain of the boat presented an order signed by Jim Kemerlee for five thousand fish. For identification he showed his logbook in which were entries specifying the hours of his recent calls at other Turlon traps and the number of salmon brailed from each. Convinced that the man was a Turlon customer, the watchmen cheerfully helped lift the haul, and the fisherman went on his way with the fish.

Half an hour later, when the *Thlinget Chief* arrived with the superintendent on board, the trap watchmen learned they had been caught by one of the oldest of pirate tricks: the order was a forgery, as well as the entries in the logbook.

It was the trickery of this rather than the loss that infuriated Dian. Her fighting spirit, roused from the first, now leaped to arms. She ached to get out there on the fishing grounds with the Turlon crew and help defend her own.

She tramped up and down the foggy deck of the *Star*, railing at the fate that condemned a girl to inactivity at a time like this. Ivor was out there at Cape Fox, she thought with passionate envy. Why was there no part for her in this drama of Sunny Cove?

But there was! A plan bursting like sunlight through the fog of her impotence brought her to a stop at the stern rail of the *Star*. The *Golden Hind* lay below her at the float. Its new speedy engine was installed, its coat of paint dry. Except for the painting on of the name, its reconditioning was complete. Why shouldn't she and Ivor take it out and do patrol duty with the other Turlon boats?

Her decision came instantly: within the hour she'd go down to the Cape Fox trap some fifty miles south, and pick up Ivor.

It was with an exhilarating feeling of release that she dashed into her cabin and began to get ready for the trip. Though she seldom wore trousers, she now dressed herself to look as much like a boy as possible. She put on a pair of pale tan corduroys and a chamois-skin shirt with a zipper down the front. Every vestige of her blonde hair she tucked up out of sight under a green *béret*. The trousers gave her a delightful sense of changed personality and she took little chassé steps about the stateroom as she gathered up her lipstick and powder-puff and thrust them into the back pocket of her cords.

She went down to the *Golden Hind* and began her preparations for departure.

Half an hour later, when she was in the galley putting the finishing touches to her arrangements, she heard the distinctive rhythm of the *River Mist's* exhaust.

Jim — coming home across the inlet through the fog!

Involuntarily her pulses quickened. She forgot what she was doing. She hadn't seen him for two days, and she was conscious only of the glamour of his approach; something indefinably complicated that had to do with swift, sure activities, and waterways, woods, fresh sea-winds.

It was a moment before she could bring her mind back to her work.

Through a galley porthole she saw Sparks coming across

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the dock; and as the *River Mist* berthed at the float beside the *Golden Hind*, he ran down the slip. While Jim was still in his cruiser, she heard the interchange of greetings when the operator handed him a radiogram. But the remainder of their conversation was lost to her in the coughing of the *Hind's* engine, which she started up at that moment.

The engine-pit was beneath the pilot-house and she had just let down the hinged floor-board when she heard Jim hailing her from his boat lying alongside.

'Hello, Dian!' he said. 'Going to try her out?'

She went to the open door of the pilot-house. He was still standing in the cockpit of the *Mist*. Her swift glance marked the stern leanness of his face; the tired, worried look in his eyes.

For an instant she was tempted to let him think she was merely going for a short run to test the *Hind's* new engine; then her innate honesty spoke:

'No. I'm going to run down to the Cape Fox trap.'

She saw the expression of his face change. His dark brows came together. 'No, you're not,' he spoke shortly. 'You can't go down there today.'

'Who says so?' she demanded. Instantly belligerent, she moved out of the door and stepped up forward where she could look directly at him.

'I do. In this fog with pirates and patrol boats running wild, it's not safe for a girl to be chasing around the fishing grounds.'

She bit the inside of her lip appraising him for a second with hostility in her gaze. 'I'm the best judge of that,' she retorted. And at the same time she wondered how she and this dictatorial, dark-faced autocrat could ever have known any moment of emotional intimacy. His eyes were cold blue, the color of a summit lake.

'What are you going down there for?' he snapped. 'Ivor?'

She thrust her hands into her trousers pockets, lifted her chin, and slanted him an insolent look under lowered lids.

'If it's any of your business — yes! And, furthermore, I'm going out with the *Golden Hind* to take my place patrolling the traps with the other Turlon craft!'

He stared at her as if considering her words. She had no idea that, as a pirate fighter, her slender golden figure in pants and funny little shirt looked adorable and ridiculous and somehow touchingly spirited. One of his sudden smiles began on his lips and climbed to warm the blue of his eyes. He said in a strangely softened voice: 'Forgive my brusqueness, Dian. I haven't had any sleep since the fire and I'm grouchy as the devil. I'll come aboard and we'll talk things over.'

Mollified, she waited for him to scramble to the deck.

'Smoke?' He offered cigarettes.

She took one.

Facing each other, they sat down on a couple of boxes Dian's Indian boy had left when he brought supplies.

'First of all,' said Jim as he applied a lighted match to her cigarette, 'Ivor's all right.' He gave her details, and added that while there had been no further raids, the patrol boats had several times arrived just in time to chase the pirates from the traps.

'It's all very well to run the devils off,' he commented. 'But if the industry is to get rid of them, we'll have to catch some of them and prosecute. Owing to the laxity in regard to pirates, this is a tough proposition. Catch them red-handed on your trap and they'll swear they were tied up there for engine trouble. Get them in the act of brailing your fish, and when the case comes up in court they'll produce a dozen witnesses to your one to swear they were fifty miles from the scene of the robbery when it happened. You see what we're up against.'

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He talked as if she had always shared his views on the subject.

'Have you found out who robbed the Cape Fox trap?' she asked.

He didn't answer at once. Instinctively she knew he had suspicions, but he hesitated to tell her. He turned the talk to Sockeye Jones, still in Ketchikan. Pulling from his pocket the radiogram Sparks had given him, he spread it open on his knee. 'From Sockeye,' he said. Then, noting her puzzled look, he added: 'In the old code he and my father used when Sockeye was a Kemerlee foreman. He wires me that Red Skain was in town last night at the Floating Trap celebrating a big haul of reds.'

Dian's mind leaped to a conclusion. 'It was Red who looted the Cape Fox trap!'

He did not answer, but she knew she was right. Winging through her thoughts went those scenes where she had allied herself with the big pirate and fought against Jim. What a short-sighted idiot she had been!

She spoke impulsively: 'Look here, Jim! I admit I've been all wrong about this pirate situation. But I've come around to your view since' — she grinned ruefully — 'since I've been hoist by my own petard, as it were. I'm sorry I stirred up that mess for you with Red. Now I want to do something to help.'

'And you can, Dian,' he said promptly. 'I've got to leave the *River Mist* here today for a thorough overhauling. Will you lend me the *Golden Hind* so I can make a quick trip down to the Cape Fox trap and back?'

'I will if you'll let me go along.'

He tossed his cigarette overboard, a line of worry between his brows. When he spoke, it was in a reasoning tone: 'I'd really like to take you, Dian, but in these times I never know what I'm going to run into from one hour to the next. Especially on this trip.' He hesitated, con-

sidering. 'It's like this,' he finally concluded, indicating the code message still in his hand. 'Sockeye has sent word that Red was plastered to the eyes last night in Ketchikan. He boasted in Blossom's hearing that he was going to make another call at Cape Fox tomorrow night.'

'Oh, he is, is he!' exclaimed Dian with a sudden fierce frown and a clenching of her hands.

'Of course, that might have been just liquor talking. One is never sure. But I must run down this afternoon and line up a plan with the Cape Fox watchmen so we can nab Red if he does try anything. We keep two men on the trap and two on the shore. If my scheme works ——'

'Jim! Take me with you! No, no! Don't begin that talk about women and fish not mixing. That's Dad's argument when he wants to keep me out of anything interesting that's happening.' Dian spoke quickly, with increasing intensity. In her earnestness she came to her feet, bringing Jim to his. 'I can't sit around here idle any longer when I know that the Turlon traps are in danger. I've got to do something, don't you see? No matter how little it is!'

'But Dian! I ——'

'Oh, please don't say no to me, Jim!' Her face, vivid, fair, under the tight little green *béret*, was lifted to his; her grey-green eyes were deep and lustrous with pleading. 'Think what this means to me! This is my last summer in Alaska — as an Alaskan. I'm going to be married in December. After that — I'll never, never have a chance for an adventure like this... Jimmy' — she caught his hand and held it between both of hers — 'take me with you?'

He was looking at her. There was a faint movement of his fine-cut nostrils; his lips were slightly compressed; he was very slowly drawing in his breath. When his warm blue gaze met hers, together they knew one of those

breathless moments when everything vanished but themselves.

She dropped his hand hastily. He averted his eyes.

'Well — all right,' he said in a constricted voice. 'We'll start after lunch and I'll send Ivor back with you tonight.'

4

After lunch when she stepped aboard the *Golden Hind* to get it under way, she noticed that for the dinghy on the stern deck Jim had substituted his own canoe with the Thlinget eyes painted on the bow.

'Makes less noise and is swifter,' he explained.

'Oh-ho!' exclaimed Dian, raising her eyebrows. 'Dirty work at the crossroads, eh?'

'You're darned right!' he retorted, grinning.

They were both being very offhanded, yet Dian felt that he, like herself, was in raised spirits. In her most daring manner she swung the cruiser away from the float and headed out onto the fog-smothered inlet. Underneath her nonchalance she was very happy and not a little excited. 'Oh, Lord,' was her inward prayer, 'do send along a couple of pirates!'

As they ran down the coast, the fog lifted slightly at intervals showing the shore line of trees and rocks vignetted in vapor; then the haze grew dense again, blotting out everything but a few yards of still, oily-green water ahead. Occasional fishing craft slid past like wraiths, their sirens sounding plaintively in the wan hushed air. But for the most part it was as if they were journeying through a world of pearl-grey mist inhabited only by themselves.

Jim sat easily on the high pilot-house stool, one heel hooked in the top rung, his knees crossed, his elbow resting upon them. He watched Dian as she steered. Though they were carefully impersonal, they exchanged ideas

about a hundred things from relativity to pirates. Finally Jim asked casually:

'Did you ever hear how Red Skain got the money to buy the *Fort Tongass*?'

Dian shook her head. 'Tell me,' she said, somewhat absent-mindedly. She was looking at his brown hand loosely holding a cigarette; it was sensitive, finely modeled like Tyler's. It gave her curious pleasure to watch his hands. She remembered that, even in moments of deepest rage against him, his physical appearance had always fascinated her: the arrogance of his nose, the deep changing blue of his eyes, the blackness of his hair... Why was that? she wondered. When she considered him critically, coolly as she was doing now, he was not even good-looking. He —

'That was five years ago,' suddenly she heard Jim saying. He had been talking for some minutes, but Dian, busy with her thoughts, had not heard what he said. Now she gave him her attention.

'Red was operating then on the coast north of here in the district where I had charge of the Memory Inlet Cannery,' he continued. 'He had a power seine-boat that was the joke of the fishing fleet: a regular old dishpan she was, so old, honestly, you could drive a nail through the hull with the palm of your hand and pull it out with your fingers! Well, the first dark, stormy night after the fishing season opened, Red deliberately ran his tub into one of my company's traps and sank her. He sued our company for six thousand dollars. At the trial he swore we had no lights on our trap and that he, unable to see it, had crashed into it.'

'But you did have lights?'

'Of course. But we had only our one watchman as a witness. Red had three witnesses who swore that his craft was absolutely seaworthy, and that he was telling the

truth about the collision. At any rate, he managed to make out such a case for himself—honest fisherman against big corporation stuff, you know—that the jury awarded him five thousand dollars damages. It was the first little stake Red made in the country.

'After my company paid him, he bought the *Fort Tongass*. His witnesses are his crew today. His first act after acquiring the boat was to line the pilot-house with bullet-proof steel. Then he transferred the scene of his honest endeavors to the Ketchikan district. You can understand now why I had no welcoming committee on the dock when he came in to Sunny Cove to sell his fish.'

Dian smiled at the memory of the furious, scale-splattered Red wallowing in his rejected haul where Jim had thrown him.

'He'll have it in for both of us now,' she said. 'He's not likely to forget the ignominy of that slide down the chute into his fish-hold.'

Jim's clean-shaved chin took on a set look. 'If he comes in to the Cape Fox trap tomorrow night, I'll get him,' he declared a little savagely. 'Or any other pirate that starts monkeying with the Turlon traps,' he added in a curious, retrospective tone.

They were silent for a little while after this.... A line of black shags weirdly enlarged by the mist flew across the bow with lost, lonely cries.... Through the soft grey obscurity forlorn buoy lights blinked and vanished....

Toward evening, when dusk began to darken the fog, Dian turned the steering over to her companion whose long familiarity with these waterways enabled him to determine their course among the nebulous islands. She sat near him, her slim, trousered limbs wound about the legs of the high stool. He had a lounging, easy way at the wheel, but she had proof of his vigilance when, without

warning, a rashly speeding tug rushed at them out of the vapor dead ahead.

It was only his lightning-like adroitness with the wheel that saved them from a collision.

He made no comment afterward, except very softly under his breath: 'Oh, baby! How she does handle!' And he ran his hands approvingly over the oaken spokes.

Dian knew they were out of the path of steamers, but she couldn't help wondering what would happen if one of the big Alaskan freighters bound for some out-of-the-way cannery should loom suddenly above them in the ghostly twilight. During these heavy August fogs seiners were often run down. Yet she felt confident that Jim would be equal to any emergency. She again marveled at the sense of protection she always felt in his presence. Her father was the only other man in the world who had ever made her feel that way.

The *Golden Hind* glided on at half-speed now, following a course clear to Jim's eyes alone. After a time he said: 'We're getting near to the Canadian border. Do you remember Tyler's telling you once about Pirate Cove?'

Dian assented.

'It's only about seven miles beyond Cape Fox. We'll soon be there.'

'Pirate Cove.' Dian repeated the name to herself, and, despite her changed attitude toward pirates, a little thrill went through her. She looked ahead through the fog with a sense of something pending, something about to happen.

Jim continued: 'Lem Hanley in the *Puffin* is anchored tonight just off the entrance of the Cove. He's laying for a couple of power boats that are in there now. As soon as I see the Cape Fox watchmen, I'm going to run over to give Lem the word about Red.'

He worked the cruiser into what proved later to be a

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tiny inlet, and to Dian's surprise anchored close to shore. She smelt the sea, aromatic damp cedars, the acridity of dried beach kelp. Spectral outlines of naked rocks and trees brooded in the foggy night. But nowhere was there any sign of a standing trap.

Jim explained: 'I've dropped down about a quarter of a mile south of Cape Fox. I want to take a look at the shore between here and there. Most of it's steep bluff with a beach at the bottom. The bluff runs almost parallel with the lead of the trap and in its shadow I'm going to station a couple of the boys tomorrow night when Red — but I'll tell you more about that when we get ashore there.'

He launched the canoe and they both stepped down into it. 'Sit flat in the bow, Dian. I'll do the paddling.'

She obeyed. There wasn't six feet between them. He picked up the paddle and the little craft began to rise and fall on the long smooth roll that was coming in from the open sea.

Almost at once the *Golden Hind* and the shore vanished in the misted dusk.

Silent, she watched Jim's dimmed figure. He knelt, bareheaded, flannel-shirted, and with Indian-like stealthiness swung the paddle that sent them on through the hushed, foggy gloaming.... She felt as if she were sharing with him the immense isolation of an alien element. There was a singular touch of eternity in their gliding thus through the phantom night into something unknown.... Then into her mind came a verse she had once found in an old album belonging to her mother — a few lines copied in Elna Turlon's fine dashing hand. For some reason of rhythm they had stayed in her memory:

*The fog comes in from the sea.
All silent I see it come, and white,
Hiding away the stars of night,
Hiding the world from me.*

*And through the lonely years
Your face comes back, and your wind-blown hair,
When I kissed your lips and your brown throat bare,
And your eyes —*

Abruptly she brushed the remaining lines from her mind. All at once they seemed to be prophetic, sad with impending farewell.

The next instant she forgot them completely, for Jim, with a wary suddenness, had stopped paddling. His head was up with the alertness of an animal scenting danger. He was listening to something she could not hear.

It was a few minutes before she caught the sound: a muted throb so faint she sensed rather than heard it advancing toward them through the fog. She saw Jim's body grow rigid while he came to some decision. Then, with powerful, silent strokes of escape, he sent the canoe in the direction of the hidden shore.

He stopped before the beach became visible and, carefully drawing in his paddle, crouched on the bottom of the canoe. He motioned Dian. 'Lie flat,' he whispered.

She obeyed.

Waiting tensely, she felt the craft under her rise and fall on the long ground swell... heard the smothered sound, very soft, very sinister, coming nearer... nearer. Had a vision of a sharp prow cleaving their frail canoe in half... And at last, finding the suspense unbearable, she cautiously raised her head until she could see out over the gunwale.

Her breath caught in her throat.

Not thirty feet off, a long, intangible shape was slipping past, slow, boding, barely distinguishable in the fog-enshrouded dusk. It passed from sight — a power boat, exhausted, lights out, creeping toward the Cape Fox trap!

Jim straightened; grasped his paddle. Dian sat up facing him.

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'Pirates!' he whispered. 'I'll put you ashore and follow them in the canoe.'

'No!' she breathed fiercely. 'I'm going with you!'

He leaned forward in the hazed gloom, frowning: 'For Pete's sake, don't argue! I can't let you take risks.'

'I've obeyed your orders ever since we left the *Golden Hind*,' Dian hissed passionately. 'But put me ashore and I'll raise such a yell they'll hear me for miles.' She meant it.

With a groan of exasperation he averted his eyes; then moved them back glaring at her.

She met the glare with adamant lifted chin and a defiant stare.

'Oh, *hell*!' His muted acknowledgment of helplessness was followed by a grudging grin. 'You win,' he said.

He began paddling, watchful, silent. After a time she felt the bow bump against some spectral-like timbers — the beginning of the lead, a row of piling several hundred feet long, hung with webbing that made a fence to turn the fish run into the heart of the trap at the end of it. In the vaporous night both trap and shore were invisible, but as the canoe slipped along the lead, Dian, peering through the wall of net, made out the faint blurred square of light that marked the watchmen's cabin on the beach.

Except for the lap of water against the piles there wasn't a sound. The very stillness was mysterious, inimical.

Suddenly: 'Trap, ahoy!' The power-boat was hailing the watchmen on the trap! Weirdly through the murk ahead, the voice continued: 'We want to lay alongside. Dynamo trouble. Lights on the bum.' The tones were hearty, though fog-muffled.

Dian was disappointed. That didn't sound much like pirates to her. But Jim had stopped paddling, letting the canoe creep forward with the tide. He was listening intently to the shouted interchange at the trap.

'What name?' demanded a watchman from the top of the spiller.

'Tender *Kassan*, from Scowl Arm.'

The talk continued, lower now and unintelligible.

Jim commented rapidly under his breath: 'Sounds okay. But we'd best be sure.' Obviously he was appraising the situation ready to take advantage of anything that might offer. 'Night's thick as soup. They can't see us down here next to the trap. We'll skirt along the piling and around to their boat lying at the spiller. I'll slip aboard. You paddle quietly out into the inlet beyond rifle range. Stay there. I'll come for you after I know what these birds are up to. Understand?'

Dian nodded hastily.

They shot forward toward the conversational voices.

Dian's vision was veiled by darkness and mist, but she felt a right-angle turn. And suddenly high above her rose a blurred forest of piling hung with nets and swaying with the force of the tide. She smelled seaweed and dank webbing... she was aware of the canoe's swift, stealthy sliding along the base of the piles that formed the outside of the trap... Then, from above, three quick rifle shots punctured the night — the watchman's signal of distress to his colleagues on the shore.

A single terrific yell was followed by confused shouts and the thump of running feet on the high stringers that connected the tops of the piling. Orders pierced the commotion: 'Tie him!'... 'Careful! Don't knock him off!'... 'Get at that spiller, you guys!' 'What the hell's the matter? Get over to the edge there and keep those beach watchmen from coming out!'

A moment later, a barrage of rifle shots from the trap-end nearest the shore announced the carrying-out of this command.

All this happened in the flashing interval it took for

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Jim to speed the canoe round to where the pirate craft loomed against the misted piles. The blurred figures high above leaped and scrambled about their plundering business, unaware that Dian and Jim were gliding under the stern of their boat. For a moment Jim held the canoe directly beneath the wet gunnysacks plastered over the name. Despite her excitement, Dian noted the singular gesture — both resolute and fearful — with which he elevated the paddle to shove those sacks aside. She made out the dim letters:

FORT TONGASS

Ketchikan

And at the same instant she was puzzled to hear him gasp something almost like 'Thank God!'

Then he leaned forward and whispered: 'Red Skain! A day ahead of time! I'll fix him!'

The canoe was now scraping along the outer side of the pirate's hull. Jim stopped amidships. 'The gang's hands are full. They don't expect interference except from the shore.' He half-rose, holding to the larger boat. 'It's safest for you to get aboard and go down into the engine-room. While the crew's busy, I'm going to cut the bow and stern lines and run this tub out into the channel.'

'Jim!' Dian's quick wits were working. 'Red's engine has a pilot-house control. Cut the ropes and lay low. I'll go to the wheelhouse and ease her out so you won't risk detection by crawling back there.'

'But — the minute they discover what's happened, they'll begin shooting.'

'Red's wheelhouse. Lined with bullet-proof steel. Safest place in the vicinity.'

'Right!' Hastily whispering instructions, he helped Dian climb aboard, fastened the painter, and followed. Both of them dropped to the deck. Jim crawled toward

the stern line. Dian worked her way forward along the bulwarks, feeling the faint vibrations of the engine, left running.

It was dark in the lee of the long cabin that hid Dian from sight of the trap. She had no sense of fear. This was one of those glorious high moments during which she felt only a wonderful sense of efficiency, a clarity of judgment she knew must lead her right. From sounds on the trap she sensed that the pirates were all busy. One of the watchmen was evidently giving them trouble.

She reached the pilot-house. Both port and starboard doors stood open. She crawled inside; crouched under the wheel; examined the engine and gas controls. Then she flattened herself against the sheltering wall under the high-set windows. With every sense alert and her gaze on the open door through which the piles of the trap were dimly visible, she waited for the swing of the hull that would tell her the boat was free.

She pictured Jim's crawling progress along the foggy deck trying to time him as he went first to the stern line, then to the bow. It was a matter of minutes, yet at any second he might be sighted from above.

She heard swift preparations behind the net mazes of the spiller, and shifted her position nervously. Penetrating smells of gas and fish made a stench in her nostrils. Her pulse was pumping in time with the faint throb of the running engine. Spasmodic reports of a rifle told that the shore watchmen were being held at bay. She had a moment's apprehension for Ivor, who was one of them; then she realized he would be safe as long as he didn't try to come out.

Suddenly she heard the cranking sound made by men hoisting the bottom net of the spiller; then the frantic splashing of salmon thrown toward the outside nets of the trap. A few minutes now, and the engineer would be com-

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ing aboard the *Fort Tongass* to handle the hoist for brailing. She tensed anxiously, clenched hands held against her breast. Her heart began to race.

What could Jim be doing?

She peered out. All was ghostly and unreal. The ground swell raised and lowered the *Fort Tongass*, bumping it gently against the tall piling... Would they never begin to move?... Then, even as she looked, the dim timbers seemed almost imperceptibly to recede... The boat was swinging... It was moving faster...

It was free!

From her crouching position Dian reached up and very slightly advanced the engine; at the same moment she eased the wheel over. If she could get a twenty-foot start on Red she was safe. If —

'Hey!' came suddenly from above. 'Boat's drifting! Look to the lines, you guys!' There was no particular alarm in the shout. Thanks to the deceptive fog and darkness, the pirates were still unaware that the boat's plight was due to human agency. Knowing this, Dian made no further move.

She could hear the sound of running feet on stringers; the mingled shouts of condemnation as the men blamed each other for carelessness.

Red yelled: 'Jump in the skiff and go after her!'

'Skiff?... Hell! It's tied to the boat!'

'Christ!... Swim, then, one of you lubbers! It's only a few yards!'

A babble of hoarse voices disclaimed any ability in the water. Red snarled with an oath: 'Here! Jerk off these boots. I'll go myself.'

'Wait!... Looks as if — by *God*, boys! There's someone aboard! She's been cut adrift —'

Dian heard no more. She switched on the engine and swung the wheel. The boat shot out into the foggy night.

A volley of shots followed. There was the spang of bullets hitting one side of the pilot-house; a shattering fall of glass somewhere in the back cabin. 'Under fire!' was Dian's exultant mental comment. As she sent the pirate craft full speed ahead, she heard herself laughing. She felt a surge of wild, deific power.

Then Jim darted in beside her and took the wheel, shielding her from the direction of the firing. She could feel his warm, quivering body against hers and hear the quick thumping of his heart.

'All right, Dian?'

'Fine! You?'

'Okay.'

The shots grew fewer... the yells and curses of the marooned men fainter... and finally there was only the muffled beat of the *Fort Tongass's* powerful engine that was carrying them out into the safety of the dark bay.

When they were quite beyond the range of the rifles, Dian stepped aside and turned on the lights. She swung to face her companion, her eyes lustrous with excitement. They exchanged a glad, wondering glance.

Dian took a deep breath. 'Oh! We've done it, Jim!' Their hands met in a congratulatory clasp. 'Gle-or-ious!'

He was looking at her, his eyes darkening. When he spoke, his voice was low and warm and stirring as a caress. 'Glorious!' he repeated, giving the word a personal implication that was not to be mistaken.

Their clasped hands tightened and clung. They stood gazing at each other, caught again in that magnetic, engulfing torrent that was ever trying to sweep their souls together.

Dian was the first to break the spell. She withdrew her hand hastily.

'Good Heavens!' Her laugh was unsteady. 'Look at our ship!'

The *Fort Tongass*, untended, was inscribing a swift, runaway arc in the darkness. Jim caught the wheel and brought the boat back on its course. By that time Dian was able to inquire in a brisk, practical voice:

‘Now, where do we go from here?’

‘That’s right! We’ve got to keep out of jail if possible.’ She saw he was smiling. ‘We’ll turn the *Fort Tongass* over to Lem Hanley. And while it’s hardly likely Red will try to swim to land, we’ll let the shore watchmen know what’s happened so they can patrol the beach.’

After some discussion they decided that Dian should be set ashore at the foot of the bluff. She could walk to the watchmen’s cabin in a quarter of an hour and deliver Jim’s instructions, as well as assure herself of Ivor’s safety. Jim would take the *Fort Tongass* down to the entrance of Pirate Cove and turn it over to Lem Hanley. He would return at once with the Chief of the Pirate Patrol to pick up Red and his marooned crew.

5

Alone at the foot of the bluff in the foggy night, Dian, in her soft-soled keds, found herself stepping along with animal-like caution; not because she felt any lurking danger, but because the smells of kelp, salt rocks, forest, all the nocturnal strangeness seeped into her blood, awakening all that was primitive in her. This was a taste of the game men played in the North — the game her father had played. It thrilled her to think she was a part of it.

As she moved on through the darkness, it seemed to her that Dian Turlon of the civilized South had stepped outside her body and was watching Dian of the North, a night-treading creature who was a part of the wilderness... She enjoyed that. She liked the sibilant lap of small waves on her left, the sense of the damp rocky cliff on her right.

She splashed on through tide pools feeling close to the earth; feeling of the earth. What a stroke of luck for her that Red had advanced the time of his raid! She felt almost grateful to him. And Jim — what a partner on an adventure! Even now, when he was out there somewhere on the water, she felt a sense of his companionship. This would be another night to remember, she thought, as she made her way forward.

She rounded the point of the bluff and came in sight of the cabin light blurring through the heavy mist. Later, she made out two indistinct figures moving about a skiff upside down behind a great rock that sheltered the men from any possible shots from the trap.

'Hello, boys!' she called; and laughed at the startled leaps of the watchmen. One of them turned his electric torch full on her slim, boyish-looking figure.

'Holy Moses!' he ejaculated, pop-eyed with surprise. 'It's Eagle's girl!'

The two jerked off their sou'westers and stood waiting.

Dian quickly explained her presence and what had happened on the trap. She noticed one man was plugging up bullet holes in the skiff, using wooden pegs the other had whittled.

'That scum out yonder' — wrathfully the latter indicated the fish-trap hidden in the night — 'pumped our boat full of lead when we tried to go out. By gosh, I'll say we'll nab 'em if any of them swim ashore.'

'From what I overheard out there, Red is the only one who can swim, boys.' Dian broke off and nodded toward the cabin. 'I suppose my brother, Ivor, is up there?'

'Ivor? Why no, Miss. Him and Hank is out on the trap. It's their shift, you know.'

Dian chilled with sudden alarm. All at once the savor was gone from her pirate adventure. She stared through the damp obscurity, frightened, wondering. She said

nothing more and the men went off to their patrolling. But she did not heed. Walking slowly to the cabin, she sat on the steps in the darkness. She was a prey to a hundred fears as she waited tensely for the arrival of Lem Hanley and Jim in the *Puffin*.

It wasn't until midnight had passed into the small hours of the morning and the fog had lifted slightly that she heard the pulsing of an engine out on the shrouded water. ... Then the long shaft of a searchlight fingered out of the gloom and came to rest on the dim blurred outlines of the Cape Fox trap.

The Pirate Patrol — at last.

6

Half an hour later, Dian, Ivor, and Jim were back aboard the *Golden Hind* getting ready to go to Ketchikan to swear out the necessary warrant for Red Skain and his crew.

While they moved through the lessening darkness toward their destination, Ivor, proudly displaying a lump on his jaw, gave his version of the raid:

'Hank and I had to walk the stringers round the top of the trap every half-hour, you know,' he was explaining, with enthusiastic gestures. 'We'd just made a round and were back in the little house — dog-house we call it — near the spiller end of the trap, and had lighted cigarettes, when I got an uneasy feeling. Hank laughed at me, but I went out again on a stringer and stood there listening.

'Then looming right out of the fog alongside came a boat with no lights. Before I could open my mouth, a guy aboard yells he's got to lay alongside for dynamo trouble. Hank popped out of the dog-house as this fellow comes skinning up the ladder from his boat. He was a stranger to

both of us, but he wore no hat or anything to disguise him and he seemed like a nice guy. While he was making fast his lines, he was telling Hank his hard luck with the dynamo. I slipped back into the dog-house for the rifle, for everything looked bleary and hay-wire, you know, in that black fog, and I wanted to be on the safe side.

'When I came out I heard the fellow saying confidentially to Hank: "How's the chance to buy a load of fish from you kids? There's two hundred dollars in it for you." Trying to butter us for a haul!

'Well, right there I let fly the little old signal of distress — three shots. And gee!' Ivor took a long breath. 'Hell sure befell in a heap! That bird knocked the gun from my hand and grabbed me, just as four others in sou'westers and handkerchief masks came swarming up the ladder to the top of the trap. One leaped at Hank, one with a gun beat it for the shore end of the pot to keep off our watchmen. And two — well, as I was wrestling with my man I got a glimpse of them getting ready to lift the spiller. Then, *whang!* My man planted a punch on my jaw that put me completely out of business just when things were getting good. Did you ever hear of such a tough break?' he asked in a voice vibrant with self-disgust.

'But you were wonderful!' applauded Dian. 'You were swell!'

'Anyway, I went out for — I don't know how long,' Ivor continued. 'When I came to, there old Hank and I lay alongside the dog-house, tied hand and foot like two sacks of spuds.

'I could hear worried voices. I raised my head and saw the gang huddled together. I couldn't understand it until I learned from their conversation that someone had run off with their boat. Say — that was a thrill! They thought one of the shore watchmen had sneaked out some way and cut the boat loose, and they began quarreling, accusing

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one another of carelessness. Then I found out it was Red and his gang. They knew the jig was up, though. I could hear snatches of talk as they planned their defense. Once Red said: "Oh, well, this is Eagle's trap. He's never been hard on us boys." Another one answered: "But it makes it bad — his kid being a watchman on the trap."

'And he's darned right,' concluded Ivor vigorously. 'They're not going to get off easy this time if I have anything to do with it. We ought to run those birds out of the country. But say, Jim ——' He broke off. 'Red certainly has it in for you! Wow! didn't he go into a fit when the *Puffin* came and he found you were the one who took his boat! Swore he was going to get even with you, when the time came, if he had to go to jail for life afterwards. He didn't know you had a partner, Jim.'

Ivor turned suddenly to grin down at Dian, his grey eyes warm with pride. 'Doggoned — little — tow-headed — Swede!' he crooned in affectionate delight. 'Having spunk enough to board a pirate boat and run off with it!' And in his exuberance he hoisted her up in his strong young arms and set her down again. 'You should have heard what Jim told me about you, Sis,' he said, nuzzling his face against her neck. 'He ——'

'Your trick at the wheel, kid,' Jim's voice broke in. 'Hold her steady as she looks until I come back. I'm going to make a pot of coffee.'

They drank the coffee standing in the pilot-house, all three very gay. Ivor, delighted with the new speed of the *Golden Hind*, insisted on steering all the way in.

With the approach of dawn a little wind came scurrying over the smooth platinum water. Banks of fog, shot with the silver and gold of the rising sun, began to roll up, revealing the timbered hills on each side of the channel. Once in the distance the spires of the mission church at

Metlakatla shone rose-gold against a green hill. Occasionally a halibut boat passed close, setting the *Golden Hind* rocking in its swell. Dian laughingly mentioned the first morning Jim had passed her in the *Who Cares*.

'That reminds me,' he said. 'On the way back to Sunny Cove this evening I must run in to the Kemerlee Head trap to see how those anchors are holding.'

'I'll never forget how beautifully trim the *Who Cares* looked that morning lying alongside the trap,' Dian recalled. Then, unthinking, she added: 'I wish Tyler could have been pirate-chasing with us last night! He enjoys ——' She stopped awkwardly. How could she have forgotten Eve!

A peculiar silence greeted her remark. Ivor became engrossed with his steering. Jim's face was all at once like a stern mask. Concluding that he must have heard the gossip about Eve and his brother, she began rather hastily to talk of other things.

Presently, noting the utter weariness in Jim's face, she remembered his lack of sleep. She suggested that he go to one of the berths and rest for a few hours before they reached town. He gave her a grateful look and disappeared into the forward cabin.

The morning cleared rapidly until it was crystal and blue with a brisk wind blowing. The wind had the first nip of autumn in it and the smell of fallen leaves. Dian went out to the bow of the cruiser to feel its exhilarating sweep, and stayed there watching to see Ketchikan finally move into view.

There was the usual morning activity among power boats in the channel. About a quarter of a mile from town, one of the big Canadian liners, the *Princess May*, caught up with the *Golden Hind* and passed. But because of the steamer's slow maneuvering in toward the wharf,

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the little cruiser again came abreast just as the liner was being warped to its dock.

Ivor, moved by the curiosity that ever attends the arrival of a ship from the South, slowed down so that his eye might run along the spick-and-span whiteness of the *Princess May*. All the passengers were on the other side nearest the dock and the decks visible from the *Golden Hind* were deserted except for one person. Dian, noting the man standing alone outside the open door of a state-room, wondered why he was there when the ship was practically docked. He was a young man with a good-looking back, and very well-dressed.

While she was looking at him, he moved slightly and she was aware of something remotely familiar about him... something in the set of his shoulders...

As if he felt her eyes on him, he turned his face squarely and glanced down at the *Golden Hind*.

Dian caught her breath. In her an indefinable emotion rose in sudden tumult.

The young man was Alan Bronson!

CHAPTER TWELVE

I

AFTER one startled, incredulous instant, Dian swept her béret from her head and began to wave it enthusiastically.

For a moment the man high on the steamer deck gazed casually at the boyish figure standing in the bow of the cruiser — golden-tan corduroys, golden-toned shirt, and a mass of fair hair blowing in the wind — then without recognition he turned just as a slim blonde girl came out of the stateroom and laid a possessive hand on his arm. The two appeared to exchange a few earnest words before they moved off toward the other side of the ship.

Dian ran back into the pilot-house. 'Oh-h-h-h! He didn't know me!' she cried, tugging at Ivor's arm. 'Did you see? Alan! No doubt he got worried when he didn't hear from me and has come to take me home. Steer the *Hind* in to the float just above the steamer and let me off there, honey. I'll run right up to the dock and meet him as he comes ashore!' Dian was laughing and pacing the narrow wheelhouse.

Ivor, now as excited as she, began maneuvering the cruiser in toward the mooring she had indicated.

'What a lark for old Alan!' he exclaimed. 'He'll get in on our pirate chasing and have the time of his life!'

'That's so! We'll take him back to Sunny Cove with us this afternoon. He ——'

She stopped talking, suddenly aware that Jim Kemerlee had come up into the pilot-house and was watching her. His eyes were intensely dark blue — almost black. There was pain in them, yet he had also the air of a man who has come up against an issue long expected and desired.

And then as she met his look he gave her one of those

rare smiles that made his lean face radiant: a smile so intimate, so possessive, that it flung her back to that night at Green Waters, to the clasp of his arms and his kisses on her mouth.

'Oh!' she said involuntarily, and wrenched her gaze from his with an effort that made her mind reel a little. Her face was burning. How dared he take her with a look almost under the very eyes of Alan!

She tried to feel anger, resentment. But her emotions were too mixed. She was glad when Ivor laid the *Golden Hind* alongside the float and she was able to dash ashore. With a sense of fleeing from Jim, and from herself, she ran up the slip to the wharf, her béret still in her hand.

Already the tourists were thronging from the liner to the dock. She passed quickly between them, oblivious of their curious stares, oblivious of everything now except Alan, whom she saw still hemmed in by passengers on the after-deck of the steamer.

Up the gangplank and along the quarter she made her way through the pressing mob to where he was standing a little apart, talking to the blonde girl and a tall, white-haired man. He was waiting, apparently, for the crowd to diminish.

Dian broke from a cluster of travelers and ran toward him, her hands outstretched, her face lifted with the eager look of flight she had in moments of excitement.

'Alan!' The breathless little cry caught in her throat. 'Didn't you know me?' She threw herself into his arms, which opened somewhat awkwardly to receive her.

'Good — Heavens! Dian!' He was obviously surprised out of his usual poise. He kissed her and then held her off to look at her. For an instant she fancied she saw disapproval in his brown eyes.

'Oh, Alan! How wonderful of you to come for me after all! I ——'

There was embarrassment in the smile that came tardily to his lips as he interrupted: 'Dian, I want you to meet some friends of mine from New York. They're going North to spend a couple of weeks at Lake Atlin.' He turned to the white-haired man and the girl who had been watching the scene. 'May I introduce Judge Westfall and his daughter Louise?'

Dian looked up to meet the other girl's appraising blue gaze. She was a beautiful girl, exquisitely groomed and dressed with expensive simplicity. But her scrutiny was the kind that made Dian aware all at once that she herself was dressed like a cannery girl in garments which had in no way been improved by her activities during the night. Smudges of engine grease stained her trousers and she had no idea how her face looked under its wavy blonde mane.

After the introductions, Louise Westfall smiled and said in a soft voice: 'Men are funny, aren't they? You know Alan has been telling me you and I look much alike.' Her tone implied that she considered this anything but complimentary.

'Yes?' Dian lifted her chin and glanced at the girl from under lowered lids. 'Well, you mustn't blame Alan's judgment. His taste is excellent, but the truth is' — she favored Miss Westfall with her sudden *gamin* grin — 'when I got back to Alaska, I became a changeling.'

'I'll tell the world you're a changeling!' agreed Alan, regarding Dian's trousers with a faint air of distaste. 'Whatever have you been doing to get into such a state?'

For a moment Dian's eyes searched his face. Then she said: 'I was out all night, my dear young man, chasing pirates.'

Both Alan and the girl stared as if they suspected Dian had taken leave of her senses. She laughed at their expressions and proceeded to tell them briefly of the night's adventure. When she learned that the steamer would be

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at the dock for several hours, she invited the Westfalls to be her guests for the duration of their stay in Ketchikan.

She felt that Alan was slightly ashamed of her. But after the first sting of resentment, she told herself she could understand his point of view. He was singularly fastidious and conventional about clothes. In the South he had always taken a delight in Dian's perfect grooming, her delicate blonde loveliness. Despite the fact that she went in mildly for athletics, he had treated her as if she were something very rare and fragile. 'My spun-glass lady,' he had often called her. And now, to come North and have her burst upon him and his friends in her present condition, no wonder he was a bit nonplussed.

Still she could not help feeling disappointed also. He might at least have treated the matter humorously, she thought.

She took her guests home in a taxi.

While Suey Woo was preparing an early lunch, she bathed and got into her smartest sports clothes. When she came down to the living-room again, Alan's regard grew warm, and he began following her about the room. Once, when she had to go to the kitchen, he came behind and, catching her in his arms, kissed her with all his old-time fervor.

Dian felt oddly unresponsive.

He was quite himself now, easy, affable, entertaining. He could talk in an amusing fashion of everything; and being an inimitable mimic, he soon had the Westfalls and Dian in gales of laughter with his impersonations of fellow travelers on the way up: the plump, beringed clubwoman making the round trip for the purpose of writing a complete history of Alaska; the bewildered American family man who in the course of a bibulous vacation in Vancouver had wandered aboard the *Princess May* and awakened to

find himself six hundred miles from home without funds or even a toothbrush.

'There were such a lot of queer people aboard,' said Louise. 'It would have been frightfully dull if we hadn't met Alan so we could play three-handed bridge.'

The Westfalls, it developed, were steamer acquaintances of Alan's rather than old friends.

Dian found it impossible to get Ivor for lunch. Over the telephone he told her of the *Puffin's* arrival with Red and his crew. He, Ivor, was going back on the patrol boat immediately to take up his watchman's job at the Cape Fox trap. He added joyously: 'The stevedores' strike is over, Sis! Our bunch of cans is shipped and should be at Sunny Cove within three days!'

This news which sent Dian's spirits soaring meant nothing to Alan when she told him. He was eager that Dian and himself should accompany the Westfalls on their trip to Lake Atlin. Though she explained why she didn't want to leave the cannery at present, she knew he was not in sympathy with her. He consented to return with her to Sunny Cove, but his disappointment was evident. For a moment this made Dian feel depressed and queerly at odds with him. She contrived not to show it as she turned to the entertainment of her guests.

After lunch she got out her father's big car to take them sight-seeing. They were tremendously amused when she told them that Ketchikan boasted four hundred automobiles and fourteen miles of road, each end of which paused abruptly and inquiringly at the edge of the wilderness.

When Dian swung the car away from the gate, the Judge sat beside her. She was proud of the beauty of that short wide road winding through hemlocks along the silver curves of Tongass Narrows, and she took a fond delight in the picturesque houses set in flower gardens against the side of the mountain. But Alan and Louise in the back

seat had no eyes for these things. They were having a splendid time reading aloud the signs they saw along water-front streets where foreigners lived: 'Hot Dog Transfer Co.' 'Suits Pressed While You Wait or Taking Baths.' 'Dynamite Joe's.' In each instance Alan gave a swift, derisive impersonation of the imagined proprietor.

Louise's laughter trilled out constantly flicking at Dian's loyalty and affection for her town.

As she drove about talking with the grave Judge, the continued ridicule in the back seat fanned her resentment to anger. Finally, with her chin set, she deliberately retaliated by taking her guests 'mountain goating' as she and Ivor called it. She sent the big car roaring up the narrowest and steepest of Ketchikan's precipitous streets, whirled it about apparently on the edge of a precipice, and dashed off on another perilous-looking ascent. She drove a car as spectacularly as she handled her cruiser and in this instance indignation lent her performance the appearance of extreme recklessness. After the first breath-taking curve, Alan and his companion fell silent.

In the small mirror in front Dian caught a glimpse of Louise's face, tense, wide-eyed. Alan had an angry groove between his brows. Then she noticed that the Judge beside her was braced unhappily in his seat.

She was filled with quick contrition. 'How perfectly rotten of me,' was her inward chiding. And a few minutes later she swung the car gently out on the High Line — the last street high up on the mountain overlooking the town.

Looking out from this elevation were some of the finest homes in Ketchikan. Dian parked and found that unwittingly she had stopped in front of the wide steps that led up to the Kemerlee house. Beside them was a 'FOR RENT' sign.

Noting this Louise cried hastily: 'Oh, I love to look at empty houses! Let's go up and see what it's like.' Dian

suspected the girl's eagerness was prompted by a desire to get out of the car.

They all ascended the steps through a greenery of tall ferns and columbine. A flagged path led across an unmowed lawn to the shingled house, wide and low and creamy-grey, with a veranda on three sides. On the right was a small grove of mountain-ash trees red with berries. At the back a rock garden and the forest ascending the mountain slope. Their footsteps resounded lonesomely on the floor of the porch as they wandered from one end to the other; and about the place was that hush that ever attaches to houses in which no one lives.

'This must be the ancestral home of one of the "salmon aristocracy" we heard about on the steamer coming North,' commented Alan in facetious tones.

'It does look that way,' agreed Louise, who, with hands cupped about her eyes, was peering in the windows wherever there was an opening under the drawn shades. 'Why, I can see... paintings on the walls...' She spoke in tones of immense surprise. 'An old grand piano... a monster brick fireplace with a settee drawn up before it... and actually, there's a library, Alan! Lined with books! Can you imagine! In Alaska!'

Dian checked a sarcastic retort having to do with the ability of Alaskans to read and write, and, leaving the others to their investigations, walked over to the balustrade. She seated herself on it, and, with her head leaning back against a pillar of the porch, let her eyes wander over the scene spread out below.

There was something portentous in the air this afternoon, something autumnal and wild that found a response in Dian. A strong, warm wind was blowing against her face; she could hear the sound of it in the lofty spruce trees swaying back of the house. Overhead clouds of mauve and silver hurried in awe-inspiring volume across a

strange bright saffron sky. There was no horizon, but out where the farthest purple peaks met the clouds there played the singularly soft, stealthy lightning of the North. And back among the higher ranges there was a faint roll of thunder.

There would be no monotony living here so high above the town, Dian thought. She was intensely conscious of the Kemerlee house. It had an atmosphere that enveloped and drew her, even though she felt the melancholy of its big unoccupied rooms where once there had been so much happy family life... As a little boy Jim must have stood here often looking out across the lawn to the border of foxgloves bowing over the rim of space at the garden's end... He must have looked down many times as she was doing now on the tops of those trees in the yards below, on the red and green roofs of houses, the spire of the church. Farther out was the free sweep of the channel dotted with fish-boats... Perhaps he had stood here with his mother when he was small, watching for his father's cruiser to come up the waterway...

And suddenly without Dian's volition all her senses were plunged into a daydream:

She was living in the Kemerlee house; she had brought back all its former warmth and life. She knew the great fireplace blazing with logs while the storms of winter beat against the windows. She knew the low, wide rooms in summer when the cool, forest-smelling air wafted through them. She knew herself standing on this veranda with the sea-wind in her face watching for a boat to come in from the —

'Dian!' Alan spoke her name with an emphasis that startled her. 'Louise asked if you knew who used to live here.'

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' apologized Dian, rising. 'Yes. A packer named Kemerlee built the place. But he is dead,'

she added. She didn't want to talk of the Kemerlees to these people.

The Judge was talking, one hand clutching his hat, the bottom of his tightly buttoned coat fluttering in the stiff breeze. His eyes took in the cloud-filled sky and the sunless scene below. He shook his head. 'A wild land,' he declared. 'A pioneer land despite their automobiles and radios and great, clanking canneries.'

Alan heartily agreed. 'It's all right for those who like pioneering,' he added. 'But I can imagine nothing more deadly than having to live here.'

Dian looked up and met his eyes across an immense gulf. She was glad just then to hear the sound of the steamer's half-hour whistle.

She drove the travelers down to the dock, thinking with both dread and eagerness of the time she and Alan should be alone. Somehow they seemed to have broken that mystic tie of comradeship that had held them together in the South. Something seemed to have happened to both of them... She was swept with an immense nostalgia for what had been; she longed to feel again his love so real, so intense that it would fill her mind and her heart to the exclusion of all else. If only he had come North when she first expected him — but it was too late to think of that now... And perhaps after all she was imagining things. No doubt, when she and Alan were at Sunny Cove and she had become used to him again, these perplexing thoughts would vanish.

Before the Westfalls went aboard, Dian heard Alan, without consulting her, agree to join them in two weeks at Ketchikan and go South on the same steamer. 'Your fishing season will be over then' — he turned to Dian — 'and you will have no further reason to remain in this jumping-off place.'

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She stood beside him waving her guests good-bye across the widening strip of water between steamer and dock; and then, with a sigh of relief, she turned to go back to the waiting car.

At that moment she saw Jim Kemerlee coming toward her across the wharf.

All at once she felt curiously young and uncertain of herself. A small panic came upon her. She realized that all day she had been shrinking from this inevitable moment when she should have to introduce Jim and Alan.

As she accomplished the ceremony, her eyes could not refrain from a swift comparison: Alan, immaculate, well-groomed, with his air of immense leisure. Jim, gravely pleasant, in outing clothes the worse for wear, tanned and lean of cheek, with weariness in his eyes. The two men shook hands, exchanging a keen, measuring glance that made Dian aware of strange, invisible currents encircling them, of thoughts lying between the three of them. Yet she had never mentioned the superintendent in any of her letters to Alan.

Alan's manner at first betrayed the easy patronage of the intellectual toward the man of active pursuits; but there was that in Jim Kemerlee, an arrogance, a calm, chieftain-like insolence, potent to be felt when he willed it, that made such patronage slightly ridiculous. Alan abandoned it immediately, and the two men began to get on. Then Dian heard Jim say, with a ring of truth in his voice, that he was glad Mr. Bronson had come North.

So he was glad, was he? she thought savagely. Glad because her fiancé had come to take her out of his life! She became abruptly and unreasonably angry.

'I came to tell you, Miss Turlon,' Jim was addressing her, 'that it will be about nine o'clock tonight before I can get away for Sunny Cove. But of course I can understand you'll not be returning to the cannery now. It's just as

well, for the aftermath of a southeaster is bringing in a sea, and the wind is pretty strong.'

'Not going to Sunny Cove?' exclaimed Dian. 'Why, of course we are! Alan's baggage is already aboard the *Golden Hind*.' She slipped her hand through Alan's arm and smiled up at him engagingly. 'We can scarcely wait to get there, can we, dear?' She'd show Jim Kemerlee how little he counted in her life now.

Jim was watching her imperturbably, almost indifferently, it seemed to Dian. But she noticed the quiver of his nostrils as he lifted his hat to take his leave.

2

It was a dark night of racing clouds that sent a high moon flying backwards. The *Golden Hind*, headed for Sunny Cove, lunged over the roughened water throwing spray in gleaming phosphorescence from her bow. At the wheel in the unlighted pilot-house, Jim swayed to the pitching of the cruiser as he held her on the course.

In the galley, with the narrow table down between them, Dian and Alan were trying with no success to play two-handed bridge. Every time they laid out a hand the boat gave a sturdy roll that sent the cards skittering. Finally Dian said with a laugh: 'It's no use. A few more maneuvers like this and I'll be apologizing for the weather.' With a resigned air she began to gather up the cards and put them in the case.

There were times when Dian was beautiful, and this was one of them, despite the fact that she was again dressed in her cords and little chamois-skin shirt, with her fair hair swept back and fastened loosely on the nape of her neck. The severity of the arrangement made her sea-grey eyes seem extraordinarily large and luminous and brought out the gallant lines of her small head. Her mouth, with its

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exquisitely defined *v* in the upper lip, was very red. All evening she had been in a sparkling mood. If her vivacity was a bit forced, Alan was not aware of it.

'Dian, sweet... you've changed,' he said. 'But darned if I'm not beginning to fall in love with you all over again — even in that gosh-awful outfit you have on.'

She placed a kiss carefully in the palm of her hand, blew it across at him.

'However,' he went on, 'I could have done very nicely tonight with a good hotel bed, instead of bouncing around here with you on the bounding billow; and I'm sure after your confounded pirate-chasing you should have stayed at home to rest.'

'Rest! With the fish running and anything likely to happen at the cannery! Why darling, I couldn't sleep a wink in Ketchikan. Besides' — her face flashed into willful, half-wild beauty — 'I like a night like this on the water. There's something penned up in me that has a chance to go free then. Something that rises and sings with the wind and races with the clouds. And' — her slim hand caressed the hull back of her — 'I love to feel my little boat battling with the waves. She's so small and so strong. Can't you feel the charm of it, Alan? Isn't it cozy here in the galley?'

His brown eyes moved over the compartment, and all at once Dian saw it without the glamour her affection had put upon it: The cushions on the lockers were worn, the phonograph old, the books on the shelf dog-eared. The little stove in which coal burned so brightly was hopelessly old-fashioned, as indeed was the whole inside arrangement of the cruiser, despite its clean cream paint.

'A bit primitive, but quite all right if you care for this sort of thing,' replied Alan indulgently. 'I wish you could see Toppy Loftis' new cruiser, Dian. Mahogany, brass, white-enamel. I had a day's tuna-fishing in the channel

on her, and Toppy certainly did us well. His chef is a marvel, and ——' He broke off suddenly, his eyes avoiding hers. Then: 'But let's talk about this pirate business of yours, Dian. I don't like it. There are officers of the law who take care of those matters

'Officers of the law! But I told you we came on this gang in the very act of raiding our trap. Would you expect me to sit like a helpless idiot doing nothing, waiting for the officers of the law to arrive?'

'Good Heavens, sweetheart! One would think you were actually a crude frontier woman! Look here: I see no necessity for your personally going into this. Apart from the possible danger, it's really rather absurd. Your old dad is able to stand the loss if he didn't put up a single can of salmon this year. Besides, he has men — like Kemerlee, for instance — hired to fight his battles ——'

'Money has nothing to do with it, Alan! And no one in the North hires another to fight his battles. Why, that's half the fun of living up here — defending, attacking, pursuing, being pursued! That's the fish game, Alan! The most glorious, uncertain game in the world. And we' — she grinned, using the term he had derided several times already — 'we people of the "salmon aristocracy" love it!'

He leaned across the table smiling to see her sitting so straight and eager, her face bright with the exhilaration of her thoughts. 'What an amusing pose, darling,' he said, reaching with a proprietary air for her hand. 'Come, now, admit it's a pose!'

But she was not to be beguiled into personalities just yet. 'Don't you feel any of it, Alan? The drama in a vast windy night like this? The thrill of a great new country lying all about us — a land of beginnings? My country?'

'Yours only by accident of birth, Dian,' he replied easily. 'And I'm not especially keen on beginnings myself.

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But go ahead and have your good time. Once we get back to civilization, you'll be yourself again.'

'I'm myself now! This is the real Dian Turlon you're seeing. Listen, Alan' — there was entreaty in her voice — 'when I'm in your land I adapt myself to conditions there. When you're in mine, dear, I want you to do the same. I want to have my last adventures here with you; something we can take back to remember together.'

What he might have answered was cut short by Jim's call from the pilot-house.

'I'm running across the inlet to the Kemerlee Head trap now, Miss Turlon. Will you please put out the lights for a short time?'

Alan found nothing out of the ordinary in this request, but Dian obeyed with a tingling sense of anticipation. She pulled a sou'wester over her head and strapped it under her chin; then, with Alan following, she stepped quickly up into the wheelhouse.

Though there was no rain tonight, Jim stood, tall and dark, in his slicker and sou'wester donned as protection against the spindrift flying in at the open window.

The *Golden Hind* was sliding easily over long-running swells, the wake of a southeaster sweeping in from the sea through gaps between the islands. The water was like shifting prisms of black obsidian with the white fire of the bow wave winging from either side. Ahead lay the dense bulk of mountains under a rolling sky a shade less dark. The clean sharp smell of distant glaciers came in on the wind.

'I'm not sure yet, but I think there's a boat lying at the trap. I want to see who it is,' volunteered Jim.

'Maybe a seiner tied up for repairs,' suggested Dian, steadying herself against the window to peer out through the indigo dusk. 'No pirate would try to brail a floater on a night like this.'

'Maybe not. But neither would a seiner tie up there in such rough water. Anyway, we'll slip up on them.'

For a few minutes Dian could make out nothing that indicated the presence of any trap ahead in the darkness. Then low on the water she saw the lights rising and falling with the movement of the frame on the waves.... As the *Golden Hind* crept nearer, she became aware of a long, vague shape against the trap. And then another one.

'Strange,' she noted. 'There are two boats.'

As she spoke there flashed from the first craft the slanting beam of a searchlight. It fell full on the trap, illuminating for a moment the little watch-house, a section of the log frame with waves breaking over it, and four men in oilskins working swiftly at the spiller. Then the light swung searchingly over the night-shrouded inlet — and picked up the *Golden Hind*.

The blinding glare flooded the pilot-house. Dian and Jim yanked their sou'westers low. Bareheaded, Alan lifted a crooked arm to hide his face.

The light flicked away.

Now they were near enough to the floater to hear faint yells and see indistinct shapes leaping from the spiller and running toward the boats. One shoved off immediately and sped away into the gloom. But the other, a low, rakish craft without a mast, swung about and came plunging directly for the *Golden Hind*.

'A decoy, Bronson. Protecting the other boat.' Jim shot out the information as he bent alertly to the handling of the wheel.

'But — hell! He's going to run us down!' shouted Alan. 'Turn round, man! Turn round!'

'That's what he expects,' retorted Jim grimly. His spray-drenched face under the drooping sou'wester wore a keen fighting look that sent a thrill through Dian. 'Stand by, Bronson. Get a good look at this boat — so you

can swear to it later. Dian! Back into the galley!' he ordered without taking his eyes from the advancing pirate. 'I'm sticking to this bird till I find out who he is!'

3

Dian, knowing that Jim must have no distractions in his manipulation of wheel and speed controls, stepped down into the galley. But it was only to slip into her slicker and go up again through the aft companionway to the stern deck.

Frightened, fascinated, she crouched against one corner of the sheltering cabin, her eyes focused on the dark expanse ahead of the *Golden Hind*.

She felt herself a part of the wild nocturn: night clouds blowing across the moon, night water heaving like shimmering jet; and charging toward her that headlong, rakish craft flinging phosphorescent brine from its cutwater; fluttering rags of canvas nailed over its name on the bow.

The pirate came on until she could make out a dim figure in the unlighted pilot-house, tall, sinister, in black oilskins. There was mystery in the black handkerchief over the face; destruction in the hands that held the wheel... Was Jim never going to turn?

A moment more and the pirate would be upon them. Dian held her breath... Something tremendous, awful, was about to happen! The crash — 'God!' She clapped a hand over her mouth to stifle her scream.

Then her arm dropped in limp relief.

The *Hind*, under the amazing, dexterous hands of Jim Kemerlee, had veered and shot safely past the pirate craft leaving a few yards between.

Before she could get her breath again, her cruiser was swinging about and crowding up behind the enemy in the rôle of pursuer.

Dian, trembling from head to foot, suddenly realized that this was no ordinary encounter. It was a contest in the handling of a cruiser and a pirate seiner; a battle between two super-navigators of small craft. And it would last until Jim made out some distinguishing mark by which he might later identify this member of the black-flag fleet. Or — until the pirate rammed the *Golden Hind*. Her fearful eyes searched the heaving waters ahead, ebony-hued, foam-streaked, with flying scud gleaming under intermittent flashes of the moon... Among the deceptive shadows that raced through the welter she made out the pirate boat, a slender, fleeing silhouette.

She clung to the edge of the cabin while the lunging, tenacious little *Hind* crept forward through the murk. In her ears drummed the crash of waves, the pant of exhausts. Salt wind poured against her face and tore at her sou'-wester. But when the pirate again swung and rushed the *Golden Hind*, Dian's palpitant fear was already giving way to a heady recklessness. She was beginning to enjoy the rough speeding through the rolling night.

There was something terrible and sublime in the way those two captains were out-maneuvering each other on the black waters. It was like a vivid dream of swift-moving darkness through which two power boats like live things went darting, swerving, retreating, advancing. Dian thought of two fighting male salmon swirling to an attack. Of sea-gods. Of a night from an old Norse tale. The wine of peril quickened in her veins. She knew this was madness, yet she welcomed it with something atavistic in her that rose above physical fear and exulted in the madness! What men! What superb, skillful dare-devils!

A part of her that was wild and hardy and sea-born laughed on her lips and cheered.

Then a vague memory came chilling the exuberance of her mood. She began trying to recall something that

haunted and eluded her: that long shadowy outline — was it grey? was it white?... That madcap steering... the absence of gunplay... a pirate who played with his pursuers... a pirate who depended solely on his skill at the wheel of a boat —

She had it now — the Lynx!

Jim Kemerlee — pitted against the Lynx!

A new fear gripped her. Her heart began to race. The pirate seiner tossing in the gloom ahead was swinging again... was circling... was leaping toward her. And as it came, it suddenly threw the full, eye-stabbing glare of its searchlight into the pilot-house of the *Golden Hind*.

Dian ducked her face into the shelter of her arm. She felt the cruiser stagger under her as if Jim, blinded, had lost control. She knew a shattering moment of terror and helplessness. Could he manage to shield his eyes enough to combat this pirate trick?

She gasped with relief as the pitching *Hind* steadied again. He had done it! Good old Jim! He was handling the cruiser now, not quite as surely, but with increased determination to attain his purpose.

Yet no human eye could long endure such fierce light pouring pitilessly against it. It would be only a matter of minutes before the struggle must end. Jim, despite his gallant rallying, would be forced to turn and run without ever learning the identity of that demon at the pirate wheel. Dian had heard this of the Lynx: how he blinded persistent helmsmen and either put them to flight or rammed them.

A trick! To be beaten by trickery! Fear vanished in a quick, fighting anger. She shook with indignation at the impotence of the *Golden Hind* transfixed by that malicious white eye blazing from the top of the Lynx's pilot-house. She crouched, her clenched hands gesturing as she talked fiercely under her breath:

'Ram him Jimmy!... Bash his hull in!... Oh, but you've got nerve, darling! You're gorgeous!... Rush him, sweetheart!... Knock hell out of him!'

Unconscious both of her endearments and her profanity, she kept rooting until, diabolically, the beam began to flash on and off. Blackness, alternating with stabbing light, was more confusing, even to Dian in her shadowed place of vantage, than the steady gleam... Her heart sank. This was the end. They'd have to turn and run...

Yet minutes passed and by some miracle of skill Jim held on... And presently she realized with glad amazement that the Lynx, finding it impossible to ram the *Golden Hind*, was trying to get away across the inlet to lose himself among the baffling channels behind the islands.

But he had met his equal in maneuvering a cruiser. And the speed of the *Hind's* new engine equaled his own.

Jim had him on the defensive and was outwitting him at every turn!

Intensely alert, Dian watched, trying to impress on her mind every detail of the pirate seiner. She thought she was becoming familiar with its outlines now. Each time the tossing craft neared each other, she marked that swinging searchlight. There was a recurring moment when the Lynx's prow sprang into pale relief against the raven water; a certain angle when the indirect glow enabled her to see through the open windows of the enemy's wheelhouse.

That tall black figure swaying to the turn of his wheel — who was he? Once she was near enough to make out the shifting of his bare hands on the spokes and the flutter of his handkerchief mask when the wind caught it.

The mad game went on in the blowing dark. If at first this fantastic encounter had been in the nature of a game with the Lynx, it was no longer. He realized he could not shake off the *Golden Hind*. Dian began to feel a growing

anger in his manipulation of his boat. His defensive rushes were more reckless — and more deadly. The very atmosphere of the night seemed to be changing. It was weighted now with a sense of disaster, indefinable, inevitable.

Dian's trepidation slowly chilled into terror. A singular instinct warned her that Jim should give up this chase and let the pirate go. It grew until she decided to seize the first opportunity to go forward to the pilot-house and tell him.

She was straightening to carry out her purpose when she saw that the Lynx had again come about and was charging them furiously, the full blaze of his searchlight beating into the pilot-house. She concentrated her gaze waiting for the moment when the rays should be right to reveal the sinister figure at the pirate wheel... It came when there was scarcely a boat-length between them. Simultaneously she felt a vicious gust of wind tear at her sou'wester, clutched it to hold it on, and at the same time saw the Lynx throw up his hand to flatten his spread fingers against the blackness of his own sou'wester.

For one incredulous, ghastly moment every drop of blood in Dian's body seemed to stand still while the man's hand photographed itself on her brain — long, slender, unmistakable against the black.

Tyler Kemerlee's peculiarly maimed right hand!

But no! It could not be, she thought, as Jim swerved adroitly from a collision. Tyler would never try to run down the *Golden Hind* that belonged to a girl. And especially with his own brother at the wheel.

She remembered then: The *Hind* Tyler knew was cream-colored. The *Hind* tonight was dead black with no name on it. Its speed, even the rhythm of its exhaust was changed. Jim, as helmsman, was effectively disguised in his slicker and low-pulled sou'wester. The

Lynx's searchlight revealed only Alan's strange face in the wheelhouse of a strange black craft.

Understanding, conviction, crashed home: that pirate seiner intent on ramming the *Hind* was the *Who Cares*, its mast unstepped, its color whitened.

The Lynx was — Tyler Kemerlee.

Brother unwittingly striving against brother, and one of them bent on destruction!

Through an anguish born of horror and pity, Dian's one coherent thought was that she must keep Jim from knowing. To that end she rushed for the forward deck flinging off her disguising slicker as she ran.

A moment later she appeared in the bow in the path of the searchlight, and stood frantically waving her sou'-wester — a slender, pale-gold figure with blonde hair blowing on the wind.

She heard the shouted warning of Alan behind her; saw the Lynx's searchlight go suddenly black as his craft swerved, and the next instant she was back inside her own pilot-house.

She shut off the engine.

'Jim!' she gasped hysterically. 'Let him go! Let him go!'

She felt the *Golden Hind* slow down.

Then for the first time in her life her nerves gave way and she threw herself, shaking and sobbing, into Alan Bronson's arms.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I

IT WAS August sixteenth — the last day of the season; a sparkling blue-and-silver morning with the feel of autumn in the air.

For the past nine days, ever since the arrival of the cans at Sunny Cove, the plant had been running to full capacity eighteen hours a day. The loyal canning crew worked long shifts without complaint. They were thankful for the hauls that enabled the Turlon Cannery to overcome its bad luck and make its pack. And though the record would not be maintained this year, they were all certain of a generous bonus.

From the fishing grounds the deep-loaded seiners and tenders had come in continually, and there were always two or three vermilion scows waiting at the elevator to spill their 'salt-water silver' into the bin from which the endless chain conveyer carried a steady stream of firm, shining salmon up to the fish-dock.

This morning Sockeye Jones stood there beside the tally cage. His little hat was cocked at an extreme angle of joy; his eyes were very bright; fish scales decorated one cheek. He was rubbing his hands together and swaying as he watched the haul pour from the elevator and go shimmering past his gum-booted legs toward the immense sorting bins a few feet below.

'Salmon...' he crooned. 'Salmon... Holy Sailor, ain't they pretty! Prettiest things in the whole darned world!... Come along, my shining babies! My silvers! My pinks! My *soo*-perb sockeyes! Skitter along now into the arms of the Iron Chinks! In three more minutes by the clock you'll

be coming out the other end of the lines all wrapped up in your new tin overcoats!’

The tallyman was clicking off fish as they slid from the elevator. Dapper Filipino boys *piuing* them toward the bins were paying no attention to anything outside of their work. But Sockeye straightened and flung his next remarks at them:

‘Would you believe it!’ he proclaimed in oratorical tones. ‘There are some people so blamed ignorant they talk about the hazards and uncertainties of the fish business! Bologna, I say! Packing fish! Why, it’s the sweetest, cleanest business in the world! And the finest thing about it, it’s no trouble! You don’t have to put a salmon in a stable and feed him during a long winter! You don’t have to fatten him when you get ready for him. No, sir! He just comes swimming up out of the ocean and puts his head into your trap. Wriggles himself, by the jumped-up, fresh and shining, into your cans! The fish game! Why, it’s the grandest, easiest — Oh, will you look at them!’ he broke off. ‘Look at ’em pouring in! — Come on, my rose and silver honies!... Come right along to papa...’

2

The interior of the vast canning plant presented a spectacle of ordered activity that was a splendid testimony to the energy and ingenuity of man.

At the edge of the clangor and sanitary dampness were Jim and Ivor watching the five long lines of machinery that, without the touch of a human hand, performed the work of cleaning, cutting, and putting the salmon into cans. Attendants stood beside the lines, Orientals and native girls in white caps, white gloves, and rubber aprons, hovering deftly above the moving rows of bright tins that inched past them toward the cooking retorts at the end of

the building. The air vibrated to the timed clink — clank — clink of intricate machines. The floor trembled to the thunder of mechanical power.

Ivor's head was turned in a listening attitude. His thin, boyish face wore a rapt expression; his grey eyes were deep with inward perception. 'Hear that, Jim?' said he. 'Each piece of machinery has a different measure. Not fast, not slow, yet all combining in one mighty rhythm. Regular. Reverberant. Unceasing. Triumphant.... Gets into a fellow's blood, doesn't it? Like drumbeats in martial music.'

Nodding, Jim hooked an arm through Ivor's and led him out to the sunny dock where they could talk with less effort.

'The music of machines, eh? I never thought of it that way before,' he said. 'But I get what you mean. The rhythm of a great industry. Well, the beat of it's in my blood, right enough. When the plant's running, something in me is always listening. At night, when I'm sound asleep, if anything goes wrong, I sense that break in the tempo and I'm up in an instant. Triumphant...?' he repeated musingly. 'There's something in that, too. I feel it sometimes when I'm standing on the canning floor with everything going full blast. It shoots a sense of power down your spine. Those lines — feeding millions. At the farthest ends of the world! But — oh-oh!' he assumed a sudden lightness of manner. 'We're getting a bit heady this morning: music in machinery, and poetry in a can of salmon!'

'Gosh, yes!' agreed Ivor, and they grinned at each other understandingly. 'If old Alan could hear us he'd sure peg us for a couple of sentimentalists.'

3

On the wide veranda of the Superintendent's House, Dian lay back among the cushions of a porch chair, her

eyes moving listlessly over the scene below. She could see the *Golden Hind* at the float — black no longer, but restored to its original gay cream-and-orange. She was glad of that. The black — If she were superstitious she would claim it had brought bad luck.

A line of Filipinos were steadily wheeling hand-trucks loaded with cases of salmon out to the edge of the wharf. Another crew stacked them on cargo-slings, which the *Star of Alaska's* swinging boom hoisted and lowered into the cavernous hold of the old packet. Blocks rattled and creaked. Seagulls hovered above. *S-o-u-t-h?* they cried plaintively. *S-o-u-t-h?* And there was the continuous pant of the cannery exhaust; the strains of phonograph music from the Indian quarters.

All these sounds blended into a *crescendo* that foretold the imminence of the season's end.

Dian knew she should be happy today. Yet she wasn't. An autumnal melancholy was upon her. She didn't want the season to end. She felt as if she, who for over six weeks had been caught up in the flux of life's great tides, was now about to be dropped back into an eddy of meaningless activity. She didn't want to go back just yet to Alan's leisured fold; to the eternal summer of California. She found herself longing for a Northern winter muffled in snow; the vivifying thrill of white winter nights; of skating under the silver of a high Arctic moon.

Alan had gone over to the radio station to send a message to the Westfalls. Their southbound steamer was due in Ketchikan day after tomorrow and Dian had promised to go South with him on that date. She was taking Ivor with her. She couldn't bear the thought of leaving her brother alone, for, though he never mentioned Eve any more, she knew he still grieved for her. Sometimes when he sat playing the piano in the living-room, his chords were like tears.

She wished she might wait at least until she heard something from her father, but because Alan had done his best to be patient during his enforced stay at the cannery she felt she owed him some return.

They were to leave Sunny Cove in the morning.

Dian realized with a keen sense of disappointment that Alan hadn't been a success at Sunny Cove. To be himself he needed the background civilization could give: urban conveniences; luxuries. He was accustomed to buying his pleasures, and here his money was worthless. He made no secret of the fact that his stay at the cannery was to him in the nature of an exile among barbarians; but he chose to treat it as rather amusing.

Each evening in the living-room of the Superintendent's House he liked to give an account of his experiences with various Turlon employees. Dian refused to admit, even to herself, that sheer ridicule lay beneath his mimicry. From the chattering old Chinese cook at the China-House to ponderous, round-eyed Olaf, the beach foreman, he set forth the Sunny Cove crew in antic pose.

One evening Sockeye came unexpectedly to the door when Alan was in the midst of burlesquing the foreman welcoming a haul as it came to the fish-dock. Unobserved, Sockeye eyed the performance with his what-the-hell stare. Though he said nothing afterward to indicate that he knew he was the inspiration for that particular impersonation, he immediately adopted, in an exaggerated form, Alan's California pronunciation of the letter *r*. And from that time on he never referred to the young man by any other term than 'that wise-cracking dude.'

At first Dian didn't blame Alan for not appreciating the family feeling, the loyalty, that existed between the Turlons and the cannery crew. But it made her uncomfortable and unhappy because his unconscious air of superiority, together with his patronizing way of hailing everyone with

'I say, old fellow!' earned from those independent souls a hearty and ribald disrespect.

She tried to explain something of this to Alan. 'You see, dear, these are my people,' she concluded. 'I've known most of them all my life. And I want them to like the man I'm going to marry.'

Alan with a shrug brushed aside Sunny Cove and everyone in it. 'Don't trouble that pretty head about me, darling. I don't give a chilled damn what they think. We'll both be gone from here soon, thank God! And as for me — I hope I never see any of them again.'

But if Alan made sport of Sunny Cove, Sunny Cove was open in its derision of Alan. One day when Dian was standing half-concealed in the door of the charthouse on the *Star*, she saw Alan, immaculate in 'plus fours' and all that went with them, stroll high-headed past the *Thlinget Chief* lying at the dock near by. He either ignored, or did not hear, the salutations of young Captain Zowie of the *Chief*, and his mate. The moment Alan's back was turned, these two tossed up their caps and without a word clasped each other languidly about the waist and fell to dancing on the deck with ridiculous, mincing steps.

As the days went by, Dian, torn between two loyalties, grew increasingly unhappy over the situation.

But this was only one of the many things that troubled her. She was proving a contradiction, a mystery to herself. Though she tried not to show it, ever since that wild night encounter with the Lynx off Kemerlee Head a strange lassitude of spirit had been with her. The discovery that Tyler Kemerlee and the Lynx were the same had hit her with shattering effect. Yet, when she looked back over the weeks, she wondered why she hadn't suspected it from the first. Nearly all the fish people in the vicinity knew it. Jim Kemerlee had been aware of it from the opening day of the season when Dian overheard him refusing to buy the haul

Tyler had brought in to Sunny Cove. Ivor had learned it at Cape Fox.

Now she could understand Jim's attitude that night at dinner when Tyler had talked of the Lynx's exploits. Tyler — sardonically describing himself for the entertainment of herself and Eve!... It had not occurred to Dian that anyone in her own intimate circle could possibly pirate fish.

There was a part of her that would never wholly recover from the shock of her discovery that night off Kemerlee Head. And Tyler — what remorse and anguish must have been his when he recognized her standing in the bow of the *Golden Hind* in the path of his devastating light!

She had been fond of Tyler in a curious, comradely way; fonder than she realized. If only she had been able to talk with him afterward. To tell him that everything was all right between them. Now — a sense of grief and loss welled up, misting her eyes — now Tyler would never know.

She stirred unhappily, recalling the events that had followed in the wake of that mad encounter off Kemerlee Head. Tyler could have appreciated the irony of those incidents that culminated in tragedy: the unusually heavy fog smothering the coast; the long-looked-for freighter bringing the Turlon cans, trying to make time by steaming through a little-frequented channel between islands; and its sudden crash with a recklessly speeding seine-boat running without lights.

Dian grew limp among her cushions remembering her horror next morning when she went down to see the *Thlinget Chief* come in. On the forward deck lay a small heap of wreckage — a section of a boat's bow, pitifully crushed and water-soaked. And from the splinters, bold and black and audacious, the name *Who Cares* still flung an insolent challenge to Fate.

Ivor, with a couple of men, had gone out in the *Golden*

Hind to look for the crew of three. They found only two of them alive.

The strong tide had carried Tyler's body up onto the shore of one of those rocky islets around which he had often and so adroitly swung the *Who Cares*.

Ivor told Dian: 'He'd evidently been killed instantly by a blow at the base of the brain. And somehow, Sis, I couldn't feel sorry for him... He looked — happy. He had a kind of smile on his face.'

Dian could not rid herself of that picture — Tyler rushing to destruction through the foggy night with a smile on his face... But she knew that for her Tyler Kemerlee would never die. She'd never know a night of racing clouds with the moon on wild water without feeling his spirit abroad — Tyler's reckless, handsome face smiling at her from the shadows; Tyler's disenchanted laugh on the wind.

She thought of the night the *Golden Hind* was bringing her back from Ketchikan after they had laid Tyler's body to rest in the little cemetery above Tongass Narrows. Ivor and Alan were in the galley. In the darkened pilot-house Dian leaned, her arms folded on the bottom of an open window. Without turning her head she could watch Jim at the wheel. He stood with lifted chin, his eyes on the dusk-enshrouded channel ahead. His face wore the bleak, gaunt look that had come into it even before the tragedy of the *Who Cares*. It occurred to her suddenly that it had been there ever since the encounter off Kemerlee Head.

The days following that fateful night had been so full of strenuous activity that she had found no opportunity to talk with him. And now when they were alone together she could find no words to express the sympathy she felt.

They had been silent for a long while when he spoke in a low voice as if aware that she, too, was thinking of Tyler: 'You must have known who he was then — when you ran out to the bow of the *Golden Hind* into the glare of his searchlight.'

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'Yes. Just at the last I recognized him by his hand. And you?'

'I suspected as soon as I saw the way he handled his boat. But I wasn't sure. The boat itself bewildered me. He'd unstepped the mast and whitewashed the hull... I'd warned him in the beginning to keep away from the Turlon traps or I'd have to get him. He laughed at me... During those days we had to protect the traps I — I lived in constant dread of coming on him... And that night with you at Cape Fox, before I lifted the sacks over the name of Red's boat —'

'You were afraid it might be the *Who Cares?*'

He nodded.

'Tyler never would have tried to run us down had he recognized the *Golden Hind*.' She thought about him a moment: his lost look above his mordant grin that was somehow sadder than tears. 'Poor Tyler,' she regretted softly. 'If we could only have talked with him once more before he went out. Only told him we understood.'

Jim did not answer. She glanced at his profile, dimly discernible in the faint light. Its sternness was as if carved in stone. She felt faintly chilled. She wondered: Is he cold, unfeeling? Has he no sense of human relationships? He and Tyler were the last of their family, yet —

His voice, curiously constricted and unsteady, broke in on her censoring thoughts: 'Ty and I... we've always been pals... Ty taught me all I know about handling a cruiser —' He bit his lower lip with sudden fierceness, unable to go on, and she sensed the quick tensing of his body in his effort for self control.

A heart-grIPPING twinge of pity seized Dian, a deep sympathy, not only because of his immediate grief and loneliness, but also for the anguish that must have been his because of Tyler's way of life. Quick, hot tears blinded her. She reached over and laid her slim, soft fingers over his on

the wheel. He covered them with his other hand, hungrily, gratefully. They had stood silent, understanding, while the *Golden Hind* throbbed on through the dark.

Dian was roused from introspection by Alan's return from the radio cabin. His message was filed and he was in high good-humor because of their departure in the morning. He seated himself on a hassock at her feet and fell into his usual conversational patter. She responded with the peculiar gayety that was hers these days — a surface effervescence, deliberate, simulated, which she used to hide from him the minor trend of her thoughts and the loneliness of spirit that was steadily growing in her.

But suddenly in the midst of their raillery she sobered and asked irrelevantly: 'Alan, are you as much in love with me as you were before we came North?'

He glanced up in surprise, and after a moment said: 'No, sweet... I love you just twice as much.' He caught her hand and pressed it. 'I found there's another Dian in you — a little blonde Eskimo rather wild and gallant. At first I couldn't get used to her, but now, confound it' — he laughed at her, his brown eyes growing ardent, — 'both of you've got me. When we're married, honey, I'll feel like a polygamist!'

He plunged into plans for their honeymoon, and by his very enthusiasm carried Dian along with him until she remembered with dismay this was her last afternoon at Sunny Cove.

She rose from her chair with an air of purpose. Her packing was finished and nearly all her luggage was already aboard the *Golden Hind*. But tonight the dinner at the Superintendent's House was to be in the nature of a farewell and a celebration, and she still had much to do.

The celebration would begin in the traditional manner at six o'clock when the cheering of the cannery crew and the

long delirious blasts of the steam whistle proclaimed that the last can of salmon had gone through the lines — and the season was at an end.

4

Dinner was eaten in an atmosphere charged complexly with rejoicing over the accomplishment of the pack, and the sadness of impending farewells. Dian also felt uncomfortably aware of the antagonism underlying Sockeye's intercourse with Alan.

The foreman left early; and Ivor went up to the Indian quarters on a still hunt for an old Thlinget chant of thanksgiving he had heard an ancient Indian woman crooning that morning. Now, with twilight gathering over the inlet, Dian sat with Alan and Jim in the living-room lighted by a single shaded lamp. The wide door that gave on the veranda was open. Up from the float came sounds that indicated the constant arrival and departure of gas boats.

Alan was unusually animated and, though Dian knew he was unconscious of it, affably condescending. It was impossible for him to realize that any Alaskan could be his equal socially or intellectually, and twice in his description of an intercollegiate regatta he interrupted himself to explain the obvious to Jim.

Dian flushed with vicarious embarrassment, knowing that Jim had pulled an oar in one of Washington's banner crews. He didn't mention this to Alan. He seemed preoccupied. His eyes were often on Dian's slender pale-gold figure curled up among the green cushions on the couch. Yet she was subconsciously aware of something pending; some issue between these two men that was swiftly coming to a climax.

Presently Alan went to the piano and seating himself began playing popular songs that had come out since Dian

left the States. He could sing very little, but he had an attractive way of talking the words to the music and explaining how each song came into its musical comedy setting. He was quite fascinating in the soft rose light — sophisticated, modern in his well-cut flannels. He had an air of vast leisure and financial security. Jim, too, had done himself carefully for this last dinner; but he wore his clothes with an easy, British-like unconcern.

Again Dian found herself comparing the two. Alan had by far the handsomer face; he was about Jim's height, but during his stay at the cannery he had taken on a little weight. Jim had a lithe, athletic look that marked him for an outdoor man.

After Alan had given a very creditable imitation of a popular comedian, he swung round on the piano bench and took a deep breath. 'It certainly will be great to get back to the bright lights again,' he said fervently. 'Kemerlee, you really should come to the States oftener. Better run down to San Francisco this fall and we'll show you the sights.' His demeanor was a shade superior and he spoke with the expansiveness of one who is sure his invitation will not be accepted. 'It will liven you up no end.'

Jim glanced up from the deep chair in which he sat smoking. 'Think so?' he inquired dryly. For a moment he held his cigarette off, watching the smoke curl up from his long brown fingers. Then he announced: 'Well, you'll soon be in a position to judge of that. I expect you'll see quite a lot of me before — December.'

There was a tiny pause during which Dian wondered if she had imagined a subtle significance in this speech.

'Splendid!' came Alan's response. He rose and crossed to seat himself on the couch beside Dian. 'I didn't know you intended coming South.'

'Oh, I generally run down for a couple of months every winter. Most Alaskans do. And this fall I have a special purpose in going.'

'You have,' said Alan, without any special interest.

'Rather. This is the last opportunity I'll have to tell you about it. It concerns you.'

Alan finished lighting a cigarette before he answered: 'Yes? That's interesting.'

Dian felt an indefinable emotion that was born of curiosity and apprehension.

Jim leaned forward slightly. 'In order that you'll understand, I'm going to backcast to a morning about six weeks ago,' he went on quietly, almost impersonally. 'I was taking my brother's boat, the *Who Cares*, for a run down the channel near Ketchikan.'

Dian brought herself upright on the couch, her pulse quickening.

'There was a little cruiser just ahead of me,' Jim continued. 'A girl was at the wheel. The sun shone on her hair. I overtook her deliberately and looked back at her face. She was a stranger to me. But I knew there stood the one woman in the world for me — if I could get her.'

Alan's tone was casual: 'The well-known love at first sight, eh! And what has that to do with me?'

'I'm coming to it. When I got back to town that morning, the superintendency of this plant was offered me. I didn't want the job. Had no intention of taking it until I heard that she might sometimes be over here. Then I accepted. When it was too late to get out of it, I learned that she was engaged to marry you, Bronson.'

There was a moment's silence. Dian stared with mingled astonishment and hostility. Alan laughed a bit uncertainly. 'You've got a confounded nerve, Kemerlee!' He got up from the couch and half-turned to Dian. 'I say, Dian! What does he mean?'

'Just a second, Bronson. For the present this is between you and me.' Jim was on his feet now. 'Dian has never heard a word of it until the present moment. I've tried to

keep away from her. Good God! I've never even danced with her! She's given me no reason to suppose I'll have any luck with her; but from the first I intended going South as soon as the season closed to compete with you on your own ground.'

'Oh, you did, did you!' Alan's jaw tightened belligerently. 'Well, come along. You'll find me waiting.'

'Naturally. I thought it only fair to let you know.'

'Damned considerate!' Alan's voice was heavy with sarcasm. 'And what, may I ask, are you going to offer her outside of your personal allurements? A fisherman's wages? A log cabin by a spawning stream?'

'Oddly enough, those are among my assets,' replied Jim imperturbably. 'And in return might I ask how you expect to hold her — if you do get her? Don't you know she's North-born like myself? She has that in her blood which will work against you always. Something which in spite of herself will send her from you in spirit, if not in body, every time the spring comes round? I understand her. She belongs with me.'

'Belongs with you!' Alan took two strides forward and stopped to glower at Jim. 'Let me tell you something, you infernal ——'

'I'll tell you both something!' Dian flashed indignantly between them. 'What do you think I am? A chattel? A squaw? Has it occurred to either of you that I'm perfectly able to make my own decisions?'

She was shaking with anger. That Jim Kemerlee should take such a way to tell her he loved her was unthinkable, monstrous. Yet when she heard him, something in her had leaped with happiness. She crushed the feeling instantly. But because of it she was furious with herself; and with Alan for having left her alone so long; and with both men because each seemed so sure of her. Jim Kemerlee's unparalleled effrontery! His calm assumption that she was

his for the taking, once he was free to devote himself to eliminating Alan!

She emphasized her scorn of him by addressing her carefully controlled words to Alan. 'There's no need for Mr. Kemerlee's traveling South to learn that I do *not* belong with him as he so quaintly and modestly puts it. And since he understands me so completely, I trust he knows just what I'm thinking of him at the present moment.'

She flung him a glance of disdain.

He was standing very straight and dark and tall in the glow of the shaded lamp. There was nothing about him to indicate that he was aware of his offense. His eyes met hers gravely; then he gave her that particular smile — tinged with audacity this time — that always seemed to melt her heart and encompass her like possessive arms. 'We can discuss that,' he said, 'when I see you in the South.'

Dian bit her lip and averted her gaze. With sudden savage vehemence she said: 'I don't think I care to stay here tonight. The *Golden Hind* is ready. We'll leave immediately for Ketchikan.' Slipping her hand through Alan's arm, she started to move with him toward the door.

'Well, Kemerlee ——' There was derision in Alan's short laugh. 'I ——'

'Listen!' Dian had come to a stop, her finger up, her eyes widening.

For some minutes, though the three had been too intent on their own affairs to notice, there had been a commotion down at the float: the arrival of a power boat, shouts, hails, and the tramp of feet on the board walk leading from the dock. Now came the nearing sound of footsteps on the veranda; the arresting tones of a deep, authoritative voice.

An instant later, a tall man stepped into the open doorway and swept the room with an eagle-like glance.

'Dad!' cried Dian joyously. 'It's Dad!' And running to him she threw her arms about his neck and pulled his head down to press ecstatic kisses on his lean, brown face.

5

There was a potency about Eagle Turlon that instantly made itself felt: something peculiar to his individualistic pioneer type. From his eyes, his face, his step, from the whole man there radiated power.

He was over six feet tall, slender, yet broad-shouldered, and carried himself with the deceptive ease that marks the man who can instantly leap into action. He wore a brown suit of excellent cut and material. A brown fedora, wide-brimmed and curling jauntily at the edge, shaded his grey eyes, deep-set, keen, and very, very sure. His nose was aquiline, his chin arrogant. But even his enemies acknowledged the charm of the humorous, beguiling smile he could bring to his well-formed mouth.

'Dad, you precious angel! I can hardly believe you're here!' Dian was clinging to him as if she would never let him go. 'I've been waiting so long! However did you get here without our knowing it?'

He smiled down at her. 'Pretty glad to see the old man!' His deep, flexible voice gave the impression that if he cared to let it out, he could raise the echoes in the farthest hills. 'I came by plane from the Aleutians to Ketchikan, and Lem Hanley brought me over tonight in the *Puffin*.'

Still clasping her, he looked out over Dian's golden head — an eagle above its fledgling. He nodded curtly to Jim Kemerlee, but as his gaze encountered Alan, both his eyes and smile turned quizzical.

'Well, well, my boy! A little surprise, eh? Nice family party to welcome me home.'

After Alan had come forward and greeted him, Turlon

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looked back over his shoulder and called: 'Come on in now, boys! Lem's got to get back to Ketchikan tonight. I can't waste time on preliminaries. Besides, I want this thing settled.' With one hand he swept the fedora from his thick brown hair; with the other arm about Dian he led her from the doorway into the room.

The move disclosed Sockeye Jones, whose face wore a peculiar expression compounded of indignation and alarm which had somehow communicated itself to the angle of his little white hat.

Behind him loomed Red Skain, shifty-eyed, defiant.

'Sit down! Sit down, everybody!' commanded Turlon, dropping into a chair and drawing Dian to the arm of it. 'You too, Kemerlee... Turn on more lights, here, so a man can see what he's doing!... Ah, thanks, Alan. That's better... Now, my girl' — he brought his large, shapely hand down on Dian's knee — 'we'll get at the matter of that radiogram you sent me. I want a showdown with this fellow who's been trying to run Sunny Cove into the hole.'

Dian caught her breath. Her eyes, wide with swift regret, sought Jim. He still stood a little apart from the others and was regarding her father with a speculative look.

The atmosphere was electric with the sense of an impending crisis. From Eagle Turlon's seated figure emanated an immediate purpose. The room itself had suddenly taken on the aspect of a tribunal — the prisoner on trial, Jim Kemerlee. Only Alan settled back comfortably and, with the complacency of an outsider who cannot possibly be involved, viewed the scene with tolerant amusement.

Sockeye, nervously twirling his hat on one finger, cleared his throat and began: 'Now, Eagle. Didn't I tell you ——'

'Enough!' Turlon checked him, using expressive hands to punctuate the word. Then he transfixed Jim with his piercing gaze. 'Kemerlee, I hear you've turned down fish all season even though the plant was 'way behind. How-

ever, since Sunny Cove got its pack despite you, we'll pass that for the present. It's this other affair I want to get at.' He paused as if uncertain for a moment, then with sudden intensity got to his feet and strode toward the middle of the room. 'By God!' he burst forth, turning on Jim. 'I can understand straight out-and-out piracy in the fish business. But incendiarism! Firing a man's can-house on the eve of a run! I can't believe that you, a son of John Kemerlee, could ——'

'Suppose you leave my father's name out of this!' With a swift, lithe movement Jim confronted Turlon. 'Are you by any chance accusing me of setting fire to your warehouse?' he demanded in a level voice.

'No!' came an unexpected bellow from Red Skain. 'I'm the guy that says you done it!' He came forward treading bearishly, hands in pockets, shoulders hunched, chin out-thrust.

Kemerlee flashed him a look of contempt. 'Oh,' he said, his lips quirking mirthlessly. 'You, again!'

'Yes! Me! Right here to prove what I say!'

'Go ahead now, Red.' Turlon's gesture turned the situation over to Skain. 'Give us your story.'

Red became vocal with the vehemence of one who releases a long pent-up grievance: 'It was just like I told you, boss: I was coming up the channel on this certain afternoon with a big haul aboard the *Fort Tongass* on my way to the Island Packing Company, when Miss Turlon' — he ducked his bullet head at the frowning girl with a queer mixture of impudence and servility — 'she calls me in, see, and asks to buy my haul. I knew Sunny Cove needed fish bad, boss, so I let her have mine just as a favor to you, you understand.'

'When I'm unloading, with a few hundred fish on the dock, this bird Kemerlee comes in from some place. First he bawls me out. Then he dumps all my fish back into the

hold. And *then*, when I wasn't looking, he sneaks up behind me and throws me in on top of my fish. He tells me to get the hell out and stay out.' Red's pale eyes gleamed balefully.

Turlon nodded. His lips were compressed; his gaze cryptic.

'But it takes more than him to scare me off, boss. I knew he was up to no good when you was gone and I was keeping an eye on the plant for you, see? So that night when I'm on my way back from the Island Packing Company's, I says to my crew: "Boys," I says, "I'm going in here to Sunny Cove and have a showdown with that so-and-so Kemerlee."'

'Yeah!' interposed Sockeye savagely. 'Just carving off a slab o' sorrow for yourself, that's all.'

Red ignored the interruption. He interlaced the fingers of his pulpy hands and held them flat against his diaphragm.

'It was pitch-dark by this time — or pretty near so,' he amended, his eyes sliding from one to another as if to mark the effect of his story. 'Blowing and raining like the devil, too. There wasn't any boats at the float, but I eases the *Fort Tongass* in and ties up. Something was wrong with the carburetor, and after we got it fixed, one of my boys and me gets into our oilskins and starts across the dock going to the Superintendent's House.'

'I see,' encouraged Turlon.

'It sure was a tough night. No one around the docks, or anything. But lights from the wharf and the *Star* was kind-a flickering through the rain onto the water between the cannery and the warehouse, see? And just as we came out there I got a tail-end glimpse of something slipping between the piles under the warehouse.'

'Huh!' came a pistol-shot snort of incredulity from Sockeye.

Red glared at him while he dragged a red bandanna from

his pocket and mopped his brow. He took a deep breath and went on:

'Thinks I: "That's funny." And I slips along to a place where I could hide myself and get a good view of that side of the warehouse. Maybe there's thirty feet of water between me and it, see? And pretty soon I makes out it was a canoe under there with a man in it doing something. He had black oilskins on and some sort of a contraption on his back. He was moving round reaching up to the floor of the warehouse just above his head.'

'Oh, say ——' began Sockeye, bouncing out of his seat.

'Sit down! *Sit down!*' Turlon motioned him to be quiet.

Sockeye subsided, truculently jamming his hat back on over one eye.

Red went on: 'By this time I was getting used to them flickering lights in the rain, and I see this guy has on one of them automatic sprayers — a little tank outfit you can carry strapped to your back pumped full of air, you know. With the nozzle of this thing he was spraying something on the underneath of the warehouse. On such a dirty night I s'pose he figured no one would be round to pipe him off, so he was floating round under there doing a good job.'

Sockeye let loose a subterranean groan.

'And then,' continued Red glibly, 'while we was watching there, we seen the guy come out in the canoe and paddle off a ways from the end of the dock, and sink something overboard. We couldn't make out what it was. But when he turns the canoe and starts back, we seen he didn't have the contraption on his back. And the canoe had two eyes painted on the bow. And the man in it was' — Red pointed a podgy finger at Jim Kemerlee — 'that feller standing right there!'

'Aw! What are you giving us!' roared Sockeye, hopping out into the middle of the room. 'It was a fine night when

the warehouse burned down. Stars and everything. And ——'

Turlon cut him off: 'Let Red alone, you old fool! Let him finish his story.'

'Say — you!' Red's aggrieved voice blared at Sockeye. 'What-a you trying to do? Get me all balled up? I know it was a fine night when the warehouse burned down — it was the night *after* we seen this guy underneath it!' The sequence of his story was broken, but no one seemed to notice it. 'When me an' my boys heard about it, we got wise to what this feller had been doing under there. Spraying with oil — that's what — so it could soak in good, and when he got a chance he could set it off. No wonder the place burned like tinder! — Oh, this bird's a swell dish, all right! I know him! I had a set-to with him over a collision onct up at Memory Inlet! Made him look like a monkey in court, too!'

'That's the biggest bunch of hooley I ever heard in all my life!' yelled Sockeye, wheeling to face Turlon. 'A cock-and-bull story from the word go. My God, Eagle, if you believe ——'

Turlon interrupted: 'We'll soon know how much truth there is in Red's story. I've got a couple of men dragging for that sprayer now.'

'Sprayer!' Sockeye's voice cracked with indignation. 'Hell! As foreman of this works I can tell you there isn't such an oil-sprayer about the plant. Furthermore ——'

He stopped, his mouth hanging open. He was facing the open door into which a workman had just stepped.

Eagle Turlon glanced up in the direction of the foreman's stricken gaze. 'Well, George!' he addressed the newcomer — 'What luck?'

'Got it, sir. Weighed down with a sack of stones.' The man lowered to the floor an automatic oil-sprayer and at a word from Turlon departed.

'What did I tell you!' proclaimed Red in triumph. 'That's it! That's the thing he had on him the night I seen him!'

Every eye was turned on Kemerlee. He stood smoking and looking at the object just brought in. His face was inscrutable. He said nothing.

'Well!' snapped Eagle Turlon. 'Do you recognize that, Kemerlee?'

'No, sir.' There was a trenchant irony in the answer. 'I never saw it before.'

Turlon eyed him in keen appraisement; then, as if he had made up his mind concerning his next move, he began: 'Where were you, Kemerlee, on that — By the way, Red, what date was that — the night you saw Kemerlee in his canoe?'

Red supplied the date promptly: 'July thirty-first. I remember it because the run began on the first of August — that's the night the warehouse burned.'

Kemerlee quickened with the first interest he had shown during Red's recital. 'The night of July thirty-first?' he repeated.

'That's what I said, young feller.'

'Well, Kemerlee,' began Turlon. 'Let's —'

Sockeye cut in: 'Eagle! You've got to listen to me! No! I won't be thwarted no more! I tell you Jimmy wasn't even at the cannery that night. I remember now, he lit out just after Augustine and Primo had a little set-to with a sliming knife. I saw him myself beating it away in the *River Mist*, and I wondered at the time because there was a hell of a sea on, and —'

'But there was nothing to keep him from coming back to the cannery after dark!' countered Red.

'That's enough from you! Now we'll say our piece!' Sockeye, turning his head so as to keep a flaming eye on Red, crossed the room and planted his sturdy figure beside

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Kemerlee. 'Jimmy...' He swung to the younger man. 'What's the big idea — keeping mum at a time like this? Tell this uncultured sausage where you went that night. What trap you visited. The watchmen there will soon put the lie on him — the lobster-faced skate.'

Kemerlee flicked his cigarette into the fireplace. 'Never mind, old-timer,' he answered. 'We'll let it go as it looks.' His jaw tightened as he turned to Eagle Turlon. 'I'm ready for anything you want done,' he said quietly. 'Only make it snappy.' He started toward the door.

'See, boss! He knows when his goose is cooked!' chortled Red, lumberingly eager. But Eagle Turlon, ignoring him, was regarding Kemerlee with an expression of puzzlement.

'Wait a minute, Kemerlee!' he temporized. There was a curious hesitancy in his demeanor. 'I don't want to take any steps in this matter before I'm certain. Think, young fellow. Isn't there someone who can prove where you were that night?'

'Not a soul,' came the emphatic reply. 'I was out in the *River Mist* all alone. Come along. Let's get out of here.'

Dian's golden figure moved suddenly into the midst of the men who had temporarily forgotten her presence. 'Dad, I want to ask a question.' Her manner was deceptively meek.

'Go ahead, my girl. Go ahead.'

She faced Red suddenly and demanded: 'Where were *you* the night the warehouse burned, Red?'

Obviously taken aback by her abruptness, he stammered: 'Why, I — I — Let me see, I was down off the Cape Fox shore.'

'Over fifty miles from here, isn't it, Red?'

'Yes, Miss Dian. That's right! That's right!'

'Very well.' Her faint smile was caustic. 'You might explain to Dad later how it was I passed you not two miles

from Sunny Cove at the very hour the warehouse was in flames. As for Jim, Dad: all this fuss is ridiculous. I can tell you where he was on the night of July thirty-first ——’

‘Dian! Please don’t interfere in my affairs!’ Kemerlee’s voice rang out sharply, but his eyes met hers darkened with painful anxiety. He gave his head a quick, imploring shake. Brief as was this interchange, Eagle Turlon noted it.

‘Don’t be absurd,’ replied Dian, matter-of-factly. And, heedless of everything but the injustice of Red’s accusations, she went straight to her point. ‘Jim spent that night at Green Waters. He was with me on the *Golden Hind* from six o’clock in the evening to five the next morning.’

6

Dian, with the modern girl’s wholesome carelessness of conventions, was yet familiar with Alaska’s often contradictory standards; but she was unprepared for her father’s reception of her announcement. For the first time in her life she saw his face grow grey under its tan. He straightened his tall figure like a man recovering from a blow, and then she became aware that Alan had sprung from his seat and was beside her, his hand on her arm.

‘Dian! You don’t realize what you’re saying! Don’t pay any attention to her, Turlon. You see how it is — she’s sorry for this fellow Kemerlee and is just trying to save ——’

Dian interrupted indignantly: ‘Of course I know what I’m saying! I ——’ She stopped abruptly, compelled to silence by her father’s peremptory gesture.

‘Sockeye! Take Red out of here — down to the *Puffin*.’ Turlon’s words were tense with restraint. ‘I’ll see you later.’

While Sockeye was complying, Turlon shifted his position so that Jim, Alan, and Dian were standing in front of him. His face had taken on the ruthless eagle look that had earned him his name. His probing grey eyes were searching the faces of the three as if he were piercing into their thoughts; his lightning-quick mind was coming to some decision.

As the foreman and his charge disappeared, Turlon fixed his gaze on Jim and spoke in the cold, dominating voice with which he had on occasions faced down his enemies and brought his employees into trembling submission.

'Kemerlee, you double-crossing whelp! You're going to get all that's coming to you for this. You took advantage of my absence. You made me lose my packing record. You deliberately compromised my daughter ——'

'Just a minute!' Jim cut in with an arrogant air of authority that matched Turlon's own. At the same time he stepped forward and the two, standing close, exchanged an appraising glance. 'Concerning Sunny Cove: I ran the plant on the square as if it had been my own. I turned away certain hauls because they were pirated, but even so I put up your pack. Ninety thousand cases. Though I lost one record for you, Turlon, I established another — a better one: for the first time since your name has been on this plant *not a single stolen fish went into the cans!*'

'You insulting young ——'

'Regarding your daughter,' pursued Jim determinedly, 'a man doesn't compromise the girl he hopes one day to make his wife.'

'Wife!' roared Turlon, as if suddenly shaken out of his composure. 'Wife! So you took her off to Green Waters ——'

'Oh, Dad! Don't talk like that!' implored Dian, catching him by both arms and impatiently shaking him. 'I'll tell you about Green Waters if you'll only listen.' She

stepped back so that she could look up into his savage face.

'You see I was so furious when Jim refused to accept that haul I bought from Red Skain, I packed my things and started to get aboard the *Golden Hind* to go to Ketchikan.'

Her father's keen gaze kept moving between her and Kemerlee.

'There was a big storm brewing. I knew it, but when he ordered me in a high-handed manner not to go out in it, of course I went, anyway, taking advantage of a moment when he had to leave me to straighten that knifing affair between Primo and Augustine. But I was so darned mad at him, Dad, I forgot all about getting gasoline. The tank went empty just off Green Waters and I might have swamped right there if the tide and the gale hadn't helped me into the entrance of the Roar Hole. Though I didn't know it, Jim, in a tearing rage, was coming behind me in the *River Mist* to save me from a watery grave. And once we got into Green Waters, as you know, we couldn't get out again until the next tide.'

During a moment's pause Alan stepped up beside Dian.

Turlon's eyes narrowed under contracted brows as if his mind were playing with an idea. Then he burst out unreasonably:

'A likely story! A likely story, my girl! But this fellow can't fool me. He knew an affair like this would raise hell between you and the man I want you to marry!' Turlon strode forward and shook his fist at Jim. 'You scheming young scoundrel! Didn't you know, no matter what happened, I'd never let my girl become the wife of a Kemerlee? I — I ——' He stopped as if words failed him and passed a hand over his forehead. 'My God, Alan,' he groaned, turning to that young man, who stood by looking uncertain, 'I can't tell you how sorry I am about this. I

wouldn't have had it happen for anything in the world. I ——'

'Oh, that's all right, sir,' soothed Alan. 'Don't take it so hard.' He glanced over at Dian, who stood strangely quiet, a puzzled line between her brows. 'I can understand how Dian ——'

'My son!' Turlon's hand came down paternally on Alan's shoulder; his flexible voice was unsteady. 'All I ask is that you overlook this — if you can. I'll see that nothing of the kind happens again, by God, if I have to stick with her till you get her to the altar! I'll keep her in sight day and night! I'll — I'll ——'

'Oh, I say, Turlon!' Alan was obviously embarrassed. 'Aren't you being a bit melodramatic about all this? I ——'

'Dad! What are you doing?' Dian's face had grown quite white. What her father had said was so outrageous and unexpected, she had at first scarcely gathered its import. 'Are you apologizing for me? Are you trying to force Alan to marry me?'

'Apologize! What else can I do for you? In my day if an engaged girl went gallivanting off ——'

'Oh, stop it!' Dian was dangerously quiet. She placed herself before her fiancé. Her small golden head was proudly erect. 'Alan, you heard me tell Dad how and why I happened to go to Green Waters. I want to know what you think about it.'

He hesitated. 'Let's not talk about that now,' he temporized.

'But I must know,' she insisted.

'Well, to be frank' — his brown eyes smouldered unpleasantly — 'it struck me as a bit thick coming on top of what Kemerlee told me the first part of the evening. But,' he went on reassuringly, 'I happen not to be mid-Victorian, Dian. I don't take it as seriously as your father. I can

realize how it was. In these confounded surroundings you probably did go in for a little flirtation just to break the monotony.'

As Dian listened, a slow red mounted to the roots of her hair. She scrutinized Alan as if she were seeing him for the first time. 'I understand,' she said thoughtfully. And drawing the emerald ring from her finger she handed it to him.

He looked dazed for a moment as if he had not grasped her meaning. Then, galvanized into astonished protest, he tried to make her take it back. 'Dian! You can't be in earnest! What's the matter? Why, look here, darling' — he took hold of both her arms — 'great Scott, I love you, Dian! I don't care what happens up here among a lot of fishermen! Anything you may have done is all right with me, dear. I ——'

Dian withdrew herself and shook her head. 'You're too magnanimous, Alan.' She shoved a lock of hair back from her forehead with a gesture of weariness. 'There's — something wrong between us. I couldn't marry a man who — who would so easily condone a deliberate ——' She broke off and finished: 'Whatever you believe my Green Waters trip to have been.'

Eagle Turlon cut in: 'But you're going to marry Alan, my girl! And, by the tarry paths of hell, you're going to marry him as soon as I can get hold of a preacher to do the job! But first' — he wheeled on Jim Kemerlee, who had been waiting for a chance to speak — 'first I'll settle with you!'

'You're being the heavy father about nothing, Turlon,' Jim coolly retorted. 'I regret letting Dian in for this, but were the circumstances to arise again, I'd follow her into Green Waters exactly as I did before.'

'Get out of my house!' Turlon shouted. 'Get off my property! You're fired!'

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'My contract with the Turlon Packing Company terminated at six o'clock this evening,' retaliated Jim promptly. He began moving away, but not toward the door. He stopped in front of Dian and looked down at her, a light upon his countenance. Through her mental turmoil came a sensation as if something beautifully strong and enveloping had made her and him the center of a great quiet.

He said: 'Dian, I love you. I'll always love you. I'm going away from Sunny Cove now. Will you come with me?' There was a stirring timbre in his deep voice. Dian felt a curious weakness run like quicksilver through her veins.

Then her father's angry voice broke in: 'I forbid you to have anything to do with that young rogue! Go off and marry him, my girl, and you need never expect another cent from me!'

'Dian! Listen to me!' implored Alan, stepping up before her, 'You're being hurried into this. None of us are quite ourselves tonight. Let's wait until morning — all of us. By that time we'll be able to discuss the matter sanely and quietly.'

'But I won't wait, Dian,' said Jim. 'I shall be gone in the morning.'

The two men stood before her waiting on her word. She looked up at Alan. His face was singularly handsome in its earnest entreaty. But already she was seeing him across a great gulf. Alan, who symbolized her happy life in the States: idleness, luxury, leisurely days with no thought but pleasure. And in an instant of prescience she saw him as a husband: easy, affable, given to procrastinations and compromises.

Her gaze moved to Jim. A dominator like her father. A fighter, a builder, who would sweep her along, a partner in all his plans. There would be little time for leisure with

him; there would be dangers, comparative poverty for a while, unknown ventures. And he would by turns be comrade, protector, spirited antagonist, passionate lover.

It was the sense of all this rather than the detail that flashed through her mind. She felt that all her life she had been moving toward this decision — to go with Jim Kemerlee, or not?

Already Alan had passed from her thoughts.

‘You’ll come, Dian?’ The graveness of Jim’s dark face vanished in the sudden radiance of his rare smile. His eyes clothed her with tenderness. He held his hands out to her. She felt as if she were being rushed forward to some tremendous climax — for joy, for sorrow, she didn’t know which.

And all at once she knew that it didn’t matter. Nothing mattered so long as he was with her.

She put both her hands in his.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I

HALF an hour later, Eagle Turlon stood alone on the veranda looking out to the float and docks below. The sky was like indigo crystal and pierced with innumerable stars. They made tiny splashes of gold on the dark, quiet water. There was no breath of wind. From the China-House came the richly sad music of guitars and a quartet foreshadowing tomorrow's departure in the plaintiveness of 'Aloha.'

The *Puffin* had gone, taking Alan and Red Skain back to Ketchikan, but Turlon, with an inscrutable face, was watching while another cruiser made ready at the float.

The craft pulled out presently and swung away down the inlet — the *Golden Hind* with Dian and Jim aboard. He kept his eyes on it until it was lost in the twilight, and for a long while afterward leaned against a pillar of the porch in an attitude of reverie.

He was aroused by Sockeye Jones, who stumped up onto the veranda wearing a bulky overcoat topped by his little work hat lowered pugnaciously over his forehead. The foreman planted himself before Turlon and eyed him sternly.

'What's the idea, Sockeye? Your Seattle overcoat on a night like this?'

'I'm going in to town. I'm quitting you, Eagle. For good.'

'Quitting? Quitting me? What the hell do you mean?'

'I'll work for no man who takes the word of a bloody fish pirate against that of a Kemerlee. Furthermore, you're a swell father, you are! I'm through.'

A sudden smile of understanding, humorous, appreciative, softened Turlon's mouth. He stepped forward and placed both hands on Sockeye's shoulders. 'You thick-headed — loyal — old walrus!' He looked down at Sockeye affectionately. 'Don't you realize this is one of the happiest days I've had in years?'

'Holy — Sailor!' With an indignant glare the foreman shrugged himself free. 'You're more disgusting than I thought.'

'Oh, come here, Sockeye. I've got to talk to you.' Turlon's voice was infinitely beguiling. He took the other's arm and drew him toward the balustrade, at the same time seating himself on the railing. His chieftain-like head and shoulders were outlined against a sky full of stars. 'Now, why do you suppose I kept you all at Sunny Cove in ignorance of the fact that I landed in Ketchikan this morning?'

'God only knows!' ejaculated Sockeye with feeling.

'I was scouting around, my boy. Scouting around. Inside an hour I had a line on everything that's happened since I went to Siberia. Everything, from Ivor's love affair down to the burning of my warehouse. I had Blossom, of course, looking out for Ivor while I was gone — but no one is to know that, Sockeye. It might embarrass the kid and ——'

'But what about that warehouse?'

Turlon laughed. 'Oh, that! Well, I'd hardly set foot in town when Red Skain buttonholed me. He's out on bail, it seems, waiting for his trial. He gave me a pitiful tale about being captured on my trap while he was tied up there for dynamo trouble, and clapped into jail by Kemlerlee on a false charge of piracy. Wanted me to help him get free. To earn my good will he enlightened me about the burning of the warehouse. He was so damned explicit about it, I suspected him immediately. As soon as he left

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me, I strolled up to the jail to visit his crew. I found them all sore as the devil because Red hadn't got them out on bail.' Turlon chuckled. 'I took advantage of the moment. By throwing the fear of God into them about lifting my trap, I finally wormed out of them the real story of the warehouse.'

'Who did it?'

'Red, of course. To get even with Jimmy Kemerlee. Red sprayed the underfloor with oil and performed all the tricks he credited to Jim. But I didn't let on to him in Ketchikan that I'd learned this.'

'Then why did you bring the louse over here and make it so hot for Jimmy?' demanded the foreman, in no way mollified.

'Oh, I had a couple of reasons,' replied Turlon easily. 'One was to make it hot for Jimmy — a sort of final test by fire, as it were. The other was to see how my girl reacted when we had Jim on the grill... You know, Sockeye,' he continued, with seeming irrelevance, 'after I got hold of Sunny Cove ten years ago, I tried my best to do something for John Kemerlee's boys. I had an idea in the back of my head I'd like one of them for a son-in-law some day. Tyler was the one I had my eye on. But they both turned me down flat. Dead broke they were at the time, too. By God, I liked their spunk!

'I still looked forward to having a fishman in the family. But I wasn't going to have any weak sister like Noel Thomas who could be led around by the nose by Dian; or bullied to death by me. And then, of course, my girl fell in love with Bronson. She seemed happy — and so I gave up the idea and concentrated on Ivor.'

'And a lot of good that's done you!' commented Sockeye.

Heedless of the interruption, Turlon continued: 'I got your message about hiring Kemerlee, of course. Then

along came Dian's radiogram about him. That floored me for a moment. To think of that little devil's slipping back to Alaska and messing up the fish business when she knew her old dad was on the other side of the pond! I could see all right that she had hell a-popping at Sunny Cove. But I've kept tabs on young Kemerlee ever since he got his first superintendency. And with you on the job, Sockeye, I wasn't worrying about the cannery. My next thought was "She's run up against someone she can't boss!" And then, by gosh, the son-in-law idea came back strong.'

'Wh-wh-why, you old scoundrel! You knew she was dated up to wed this dude Bronson!'

'W-e-l-l, yes. But the fish business hasn't kept me from remembering a thing or two about summer and propinquity and what-not. As for Alan ——' He dismissed Alan with a slightly lowered thumb, amazingly and ruthlessly expressive.

Sockeye's face lit up. 'Then you came barging home from Siberia in the rôle of Cupid!'

'I see you're beginning to get it at last, old dumb-bell.'

'Well, I'll be tee-totally cow-kicked!' Sockeye grinned. 'You was mighty delicate about it, Eagle. Using cannon balls instead of bow and arrow.'

Turlon laughed. 'I'm never particular in my choice of weapons so long as I get results, Sockeye. Anyway, when I heard in Ketchikan what Jim had been up against this summer — the late run, Dian, the burning of the warehouse, pirates, and Tyler — God rest his soul — I says to myself: "I'll put the boy over one last jump by confronting him with Red. It will give me a final line on him and at the same time show me how Dian feels toward him." You know, Sockeye,' he explained, 'it's by keeping my eyes wide open and playing one thing against another that I've managed to get pretty nearly everything I've wanted in this world.'

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'But you mighty near overplayed your hand when you dragged Red in.'

'By gosh, yes!' admitted Turlon. 'I never figured on anything like that Green Waters episode. For a moment it had me dithered. But one look at those two kids standing there — my girl and John Kemerlee's boy — and I knew, Sockeye. Both of them straightforward, clean, honorable. And then, all in a flash, I saw my way clear to get Alan out of the picture and leave the coast clear for Jimmy.'

'You did?'

Eagle nodded. 'I never was keen on Alan for a son-in-law from the start, but Dian's such a contrary little cuss I didn't dare let on for fear she'd rush off and marry him instanter. So tonight, after I was sure how the land lay between her and Jim, I worked up a roaring little scene over that Green Waters episode. I insisted that she marry Alan at once.' Turlon paused to chuckle reminiscently. 'Then I put on the finishing touches by ordering her never to have another thing to do with Jim.'

'And it worked!'

'Worked!' Turlon laughed. 'It worked beyond my fondest expectations. You should have seen Jim when I ordered him off the place. He went — but he took Dian with him. Snatched her right out from under my nose, and Alan's too!' He slapped his thigh. 'That's the kind of a man I want for my girl, by God! One who can't be bullied by me or anyone else! Think of what that boy can do in the fish business, Sockeye! And we've got him right in the family! Now I can turn Sunny Cove over to him with a free mind and ——'

'What's that?' yelped the foreman in quick alarm.

'Sure! What else do you think I've been figuring on all this time?... Now, don't look so damned woe-begone, Sockeye. Our work here is finished. And a mighty good

job we've done, too; we old-timers who came nearly forty years ago when Alaska was a ripsnorting wilderness. We're the fellows who fought it, conquered it, and by means of our own individual methods established the fish business — the greatest industry in the country today.'

Sockeye brightened for a moment. 'You're darned tootin', we did!' he said, squaring his shoulders.

'And we had a lot of fun doing it, my lad... God, those were the days! But the old freedom in the salmon game is gone now. Laws, restrictions, even conventions, have crept in. Business has become a thing of morals and coöperation.'

Sockeye heaved a sigh and nodded mournfully.

'The change had to be, of course. It's in the line of progress. We old boys know we should conform. Damn it, we'd like to conform, but the hell of it is if we do — how can we get any kick out of life?'

'You said it, Eagle.'

'Alaska's become too civilized for us,' pursued Turlon. 'It's time to turn it over to our sons and daughters. After all, they're the first Alaskans, the ones rooted in the soil. But I feel sorry for them, by gosh. They don't enjoy scrapping the way we do, Sockeye. I'm willing to bet you anything they'll keep having the law on pirates until the poor fellows can't make a decent living in the country — instead of matching wits with them and beating them at their own game the way we've always done. But then' — he shrugged — 'everyone to his own cemetery! I'm perfectly willing that the young fellows should establish the moral integrity and dignity of the salmon business.'

'But God-amighty, Eagle! You and I can't quit the fish game at our age!'

'Who said we're quitting? What I've been trying to tell you is this: We've planted the seeds of empire — how's that for a Chamber-of-Commerce line?' he nudged

Sockeye, grinning — 'but I'll be damned if we can stick around here watering and weeding 'em. Now, with Jimmy as a son-in-law, we're free to cut loose and hit the trail again.'

'Again! But where in blazes can we go?'

Turlon straightened his tall, slender figure and shoved his wide-brimmed fedora to the back of his head as if to free his vision. He pointed, his arm full-stretched toward the starry West. 'Look, Sockeye. Out there lies Siberia.' His voice was deep, vibrant. 'A land of virgin streams running banks full of salmon — just like Alaska when we first came. And no fishing restrictions yet.'

Sockeye leaned forward, gazing intently through the blue night as if he were seeing what Turlon suggested.

'Virgin... streams,' he breathed.

Eagle nodded.

'No restrictions...' Sockeye's words sounded hushed and reverent.

For a moment they stood in silence, Eagle tall and commanding, Sockeye short and sturdy, both looking away toward the new land that beckoned them.

Suddenly Sockeye whacked his little hat to a joyous angle and whirled to his companion.

'Holy — Sailor, Eagle!' he said, raising a shining face. 'How soon do we start?'

2

The hour was late when the two old friends finished discussing Siberia over maps and papers spread on the dining-room table. Turlon's manner had grown increasingly abstracted toward the end of the talk, and when Sockeye finally got up to leave, he accompanied him out to the veranda.

But he did not say good-night at once. Instead, he stood

looking out to where the tall masts of the *Star of Alaska* reached toward the stars of the clear cool night. Memories of his youth must have been stirring in him, for when he spoke it was slowly, reminiscently:

'It's twenty-seven years ago this salmon run since I ran off with Dian's mother, Sockeye... It was a night like this. The high moment of our lives — Elna's and mine. And as I look back,' he went on in a brisker tone, 'the thing that made it particularly glorious was the raging scene we had with Elna's father just before we left — old Sea-Devil Nilsson.'

Sockeye nodded. 'I knew him, Eagle. I knew him.'

'I couldn't bring myself to put on as violent a show for my little girl as old Captain Nils did for his, but, at that, I must have been fairly convincing.'

'I'll tell the world! So convincing that you sent those two kids of ours heading right for the preacher at Metlakatla Mission tonight. They told me — just before they shoved off.' Sockeye paused and cleared his throat. Then he said shyly: 'You know, Eagle, it was sort of damned beautiful to see them setting out standing at the wheel together... Jim was steering with one hand, she was leaning back against him, and he had his other arm round her as if he was holding the world.'

'I was watching, Sockeye.' A strange, rough sweetness was in Eagle Turlon's voice. 'It was beautiful. It made me remember ——' He broke off with a quick constriction of the throat and suddenly paced the length of the veranda.

When he came back he was himself again. 'God love 'em!' he said heartily. 'Tomorrow I'll hunt them up and give them my blessing.'

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